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KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 15 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY REITERATED THAT THE CONTENTMENT OF THE PEOPLE IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY.

HE SAID WHEN A CHOICE HAD TO BE MADE, THE COUNTRY WOULD PLACE EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPMENT OVER ARMAMENTS.

+IN ANY CASE, AS THE COST AND SOPHISTICATION OF ARMS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT ESCALATE BEYOND OUR REACH, WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SCALE DOWN OUR BUDGET FOR THE ARMED FORCES,+ HE SAID WHEN OPENING A SEMINAR HERE ON NATIONAL SECURITY.

THE THREE-DAY +NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SECURITY: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES+ IS THE FIRST BY THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (ISIS) AND ATTENDED BY 145 PEOPLE COMPRISING THE COUNTRY'S +BRAINS+ AS WELL AS KEY OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE FORMULATION AND EXECUTION OF SECURITY POLICIES.

AMONG THEM ARE FORMER PRIME MINISTER TUN HUSSEIN ONN, DEFENCE MINISTER DATUK ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI, MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT DATUK KHALIL YAKOB, DEPUTY HOME MINISTER DATUK RADZI SHEIKH AHMAD, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER TAN SRI GHAZALI SHAFIE AND TREASURY SECRETARY-GENERAL TAN SRI ZAIN AZRAI. -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID MALAYSIA ALSO PLACED EMPHASIS ON CLOSE COOPERATION WITH FRIENDLY COUNTRIES AND NEIGHBOURS +WITH A VIEW TO MAKING AS FEW ENEMIES AS POSSIBLE+.

ADMITTING THAT MALAYSIA WAS INCAPABLE OF DEFENDING ITSELF AGAINST POWERFUL ENEMIES IN A CONVENTIONAL WAR, HE WAS HOWEVER CONFIDENT THAT THE MALAYSIAN SECURITY FORCES WERE CAPABLE OF +BLOODYING THE NOSE+ OF ANYONE TRYING TO ATTACK THE COUNTRY.

+AFTER THAT, GUERILLA WARFARE WILL LEAVE THE ENEMY NO TIME TO GLOAT OVER THEIR GAINS,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO REITERATED IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE COUNTRY PLACED EMPHASIS ON TOTAL SECURITY FOR, HE SAID, IN THIS MODERN WORLD NATIONAL SECURITY SHOULD NOT BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF JUST THE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

HE SAID THE DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY SHOULD NOT BE BURDENED UPON THE SECURITY FORCES, CABINET MINISTERS AND THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION, BUT SHOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL CITIZENS. --
MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID NATIONAL SECURITY DEPENDED ON POLITICAL STABILITY, ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND SOCIAL HARMONY.

+WITHOUT THESE ALL THE GUNS IN THE WORLD CANNOT PREVENT A COUNTRY FROM BEING OVERCOME BY ITS ENEMIES, WHOSE AMBITION CAN BE FULFILLED SOMETIMES WITHOUT FIRING A SINGLE SHOT, FOR ALL THEY NEED REALLY IS .TO SUBVERT THE PEOPLE AND SET UP A PUPPET REGIME.+

THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THAT APART FROM THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS, MALAYSIA DID NOT HAVE ENEMIES AT THE MOMENT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE CERTAIN FORCES OR NATIONS THAT WERE CONSCIOUSLY OR OTHERWISE UNDERMINING THE COUNTRY'S SECURITY.

ONE WAY WAS THROUGH THE ECONOMIC FIELD IN WHICH MALAYSIA, IN RECENT YEARS, HAD BEEN DOING EXTREMELY WELL, ACHIEVING GROWTH OF BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHT PERCENT YEARLY, HE SAID.

HE SAID THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE THE PEOPLE CONTENTED AND THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO POSE ANY SECURITY THREAT TO THE COUNTRY, BUT THE CURRENT RECESSION WAS A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY.

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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SINCE THE RECESSION WAS FOREIGN GENERATED, OR POSSIBLY FOREIGN ENGINEERED, IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT TO SUSPECT MANIPULATION BY UNDECLARED ENEMIES.

THE RECESSION HAD RESULTED IN SOME COUNTRIES FACING STRIKES AND RIOTS AS THERE WAS NOW LESS MONEY FOR EVERYONE AND A GENERAL SENSE OF DISSATISFACTION PREVAILED RESULTING IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY BEING THREATENED, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO NOTED THAT THE MODERN POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT WAS CLEARLY INSTABILITY-PRONE AND UNLESS A GOVERNMENT WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER, A SECURITY SITUATION WOULD DEFINITELY ARISE.

HE SAID SOCIAL PROBLEMS TOO COULD LEAD TO SECURITY THREATS, ESPECIALLY IF A COUNTRY WAS PEOPLED BY DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS OR RELIGIOUS ADHERENTS LEADING TO SEGREGATION AMONG THEM.

THE SITUATION COULD WORSEN, HE SAID, IF THERE APPEARED +CHAMPIONS+ ATTEMPTING TO GAIN POPULARITY FOR THEIR OWN INTEREST, AND THIS EVENTUALLY WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER INSTABILITY AND THREAT TO THE COUNTRY. -- MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID SECURITY THREATS COULD BE AVOIDED IF THE PEOPLE WERE TO OBEY NOT JUST THE LETTER BUT ALSO THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW.

+THE LAW MAY BE AN ASS BUT IF YOU FLOUT IT SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU DISAGREE WITH IT THEN ORDERLINESS IN LIFE CANNOT BE ACHIEVED.

+LAWS, ETHICS AND BEHAVIOUR ARE DETERMINED BY THE PEOPLE. THEY MUST THEREFORE OBEY AND FOLOW THEM. IF SOME ERRED THE REST CAN ACT TO CURB THEM.+

HE SAID MINORITY RIGHTS MUST BE RESPECTED BUT SO MUST THE RIGHTS OF THE MAJORITY BE RESPECTED BY THE MINORITY.

+ONLY MUTUAL RESPECT CAN LEAD TO A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY. AND ONLY A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY CAN BE A SECURE SOCIETY.+

ON THE CONFERENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER HOPED IT WOULD NOT BECOME A POLITICAL FORUM FOR ATTACKS ON THE GOVERNMENT WITH OTHER OBJECTIVES IN MIND.

-- BERNAMA

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