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KUALA LUMPUR, JAN 6 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY REITERATED MALAYSIA'S POSITION ON THE COMMONWEALTH, SAYING THERE MUST BE RADICAL CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDE OF SOME OF THE MEMBERS FOR THE ORGANISATION TO SURVIVE AND REMAIN MEANINGFUL.

+ALTERNATIVELY, WE SHOULD DECLARE THAT IT IS A SOCIAL CLUB OF ENGLISH SPEAKING EX-COLONIES,+ HE TOLD SPEAKERS FROM 10 COUNTRIES ATTENDING THE COMMONWEALTH SPEAKERS AND PRESIDING OFFICERS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING HERE

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THOUGH MALAYSIA WOULD BE HOSTING THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA) CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER, +IT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS A MEASURE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE COMMONWEALTH CONCEPT.+

+WE MAINTAIN AN OPEN MIND WHILE WE DO OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH,+ HE SAID, ADDING: +WE PRAY AND HOPE WE WILL BE CONVINCED THAT THE COMMONWEALTH AMOUNTS TO SOMETHING -- THAT WEALTH SHOULD INDEED BE SHARED AND COMMON.+

HE SAID MALAYSIA WAS NOT ASKING FOR A REDISTRIBUTION OF THE +SPOILS+ BUT +WE DO ASK THAT NO ONE TAKE UNJUSTIFIED NEGATIVE STEPS WHICH WILL IMPOVERISH FURTHER THE ALREADY POOR.+ -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS THE DISILLUSIONMENT CAUSED BY THE ACTIONS OF SENIOR COMMONWEALTH MEMBERS THAT HAD PROMPTED MALAYSIA TO INSTITUTE A VERY CAREFUL STUDY OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORGANISATION.

THIS INTENTION WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE PRIME MINISTER DURING THE UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY LAST SEPTEMBER AND FOLLOWING THAT WISMA PUTRA AND THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (ISIS) HAD EMBARKED ON A STUDY.

IT IS LEARNT THAT THE STUDY, TO BE PRESENTED AS A JOINT PAPER, HAS YET TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE CABINET.

TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICISE THE DEVELOPED NATIONS FOR PUTTING THE ECONOMIES OF THE DEVELOPING NATIONS AT THEIR MERCY, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE SOLUTION TO THE ECONOMIC ILLS AND PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD TODAY REQUIRED HUMAN WILLINGNESS AND SINCERITY ON THE PART OF THE DEVELOPED.

+THESE ECONOMIC POWERS MUST REALISE THAT AS DEVELOPING NATIONS PROSPER, THEY WILL BECOME BETTER MARKETS FOR THE MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS OF THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID. -- MORE
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HE ASKED WHAT ROLE COULD THE COMMONWEALTH PLAY THEN BECAUSE
+CERTAINLY THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD NOT BE JUST A COMFORTABLE OLD
BOYS' CLUB.+

+THE FOUNDER MEMBERS MUST EXHIBIT THEIR BELIEF IN ITS RAISON
D'ETRE BY NOT FORSAKING THE COMMONWEALTH WHENEVER IT BECOMES
EMBARRASSING OR OBSTRUCTS THEIR ECONOMIC INTEREST,+ HE SAID.

+IF THEY DO THIS, THEY CANNOT REALLY EXPECT THE NEWER MEMBERS TO
GO ON SUBSCRIBING TO THE IDEALS AND SPIRIT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.+

HE SAID THE COMMONWEALTH HAD EVERYTHING EXCEPT WEALTH THAT WAS
COMMON TO ALL ITS MEMBERS AND ASKED: +IS THERE ANY REASON WHY WE
CANNOT HELP THOSE OF US WHO ARE IN DIRE NEED...IGNORE THEIR CRIES
SIMPLY BECAUSE ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS DEMAND THAT WE HELP THE
OPPRESSOR AGAINST THE OPPRESSED...SHOULD WE FORSAKE THEM BECAUSE WE
HAVE FOUND NEW FRIENDS AND FORMED NEW ASSOCIATIONS?+

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THESE COUNTRIES, WHILE CONDEMNING
DISCRIMINATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES, THEMSELVES PRATISED THE MOST
BLATANT DISCRIMINATION. -- MORE
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HE SAID: +THEY DEMAND RIGHTS FOR MINORITIES AND RACES IN OTHER
COUNTRIES WHICH THEY ARE NOT PREPARED TO GIVE TO SIMILAR MINORITIES
IN THEIR OWN, AND CONTINUOUSLY INSTIGATE AND ENCOURAGE PROTEST AND
DISORDER WHICH THEY ARE NOT PREPARED TO TOLERATE IN THEIR OWN
COUNTRIES.+

+WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THESE SELF-RIGHTEOUS COUNTRIES?+ THE PRIME
MINISTER ASKED. -- BERNAMA
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