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KUALA TERENGGANU, OCT 3 (BERNAMA) -- THE PRIME MINISTER SAID TONIGHT THE COUNTRY'S SYSTEM OF DEMOCRACY WHICH GIVES THE PEOPLE FREEDOM OF SPEECH DOES NOT MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO OPPRESS ANY GROUP.

(DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD) SAID UNDER THE SYSTEM, NO GROUP COULD BE VICTIMISED BECAUSE EVERYONE HAD RIGHTS AND POWERS, AT THE EVERY LEAST THE RIGHT TO ELECT THE GOVERNMENT OF THEIR CHOICE.

SPEAKING AT A DINNER WITH TERENGGANU BARISAN NASIONAL LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT HEADS AT THE MENTERI BESAR'S RESIDENCE HERE, HE SAID A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM MIGHT POSE COMPLICATIONS FOR THE RULING POWERS BUT WAS ONE OF THE MEANS OF ENSURING JUSTICE.

HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THE SYSTEM PLACED RESTRAINTS ON THE GOVERNMENT, THERE WERE SOMETIMES CASES INVOLVING CERTAIN GROUPS THAT ABUSED THEIR POWERS TO CREATE AN UNHEALTH SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT REALISED THAT UNDER A SYSTEM OF DEMOCRACY, IT CAME INTO POWER THROUGH THE VOTE OF THE PEOPLE AND THEREFORE NEEDED TO TAKE HEED OF THE DEMANDS AND COMPLAINTS OF THE PUBLIC WHETHER MADE THROUGH THE PRESS, DISCUSSIONS OR OTHER FORUMS.

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MAHATHIR-PEOPLE 2 KUALA TRENGGANU

THIS NOT WITHSTANDING, THE GOVERNMENT SOMETIMES HAD TO REJECT SOME DEMANDS AND GROUSES BECAUSE THEY HAD NO JUSTIFICATION OR BASIS.

IT WAS AT TIMES NOT ABLE TO FULFIL THE WISHES OF CERTAIN GROUPS BECAUSE IT DID NOT WANT TO CAUSE OTHER GROUPS TO BECOME ENVIIOUS OR JEALOUS AND BECAUSE IT HAD TO BE MINDFUL OF THE NEED TO MAINTAIN PEACE IN THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MIISTER SAID HOWEVER THAT DESPITE THE MULTIRACIAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRY WHICH HAD DIFFERENT RACES SUBSCRIBING TO DIFFERENT VIEWS AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, THERE HAD BEEN NO MAJOR UPHEAVAL.

MALAYSIA WAS STILL ENJOYING STABILITY BECAUSE THE MAJORITY OF ITS PEOPLE GENERALLY PRACTISED TOLERANCE AND CONSIDERATION FOR ONE ANOTHER AND WANTED PEACE.

HE URGED ALL SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY TO CONTINUE PRESERVING ORDER SO THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE, BUSINESS AND OTHER AREAS OF THE NATIONAL LIFE COULD PROCEED UNDISTURBED.

PRESENT AT THE DINNER WERE DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH ALI, TERENGGANU MENTERI BESAR DATUK SERI HAJI WAN MOKHTAR AHMAD, AGRICULTURE MINISTER DATUK SERI SANUSI JUNID AND STATE SECRETARY DATUK SETIA WANGSA HAJI ABDUL RAHMAN NASIR. -- BERNAMA

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