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U E059 AAE
MAHATHIR - SCHEME RRR

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 28/ (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY MALAYSIA SHOULD NOW THINK SERIOUSLY OF A GENERAL HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME TO SUPPLEMENT AND EVENTUALLY REPLACE THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL SERVICES.

+WITHOUT DENYING THE NEEDY ACCESS TO GOOD HEALTHCARE, IT IS NECESSARY THAT SOME CONTRIBUTORY HEALTH SCHEME SHOULD BE INSTITUTED FOR THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THE RISING COST OF MEDICAL CARE WAS OF CONCERN TO ALL, ESPECIALLY THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH PRESENTLY MAINTAINED A NON-CONTRIBUTORY COMPREHENSIVE MEDICAL SERVICE.

THIS HAD BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT TO A LARGE EXTENT BY THE HIGH COST OF HIGH-TECH MEDICAL EQUIPMENTS USED IN DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AND THE INCREASING SOPHISTICATED MANAGEMENT OF PATIENTS, HE SAID AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL COMBINED SCIENTIFIC MEETING AT THE HILTON HOTEL HERE.

THE FOUR-DAY MEETING ORGANISED BY THE COLLEGES OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS, PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF MALAYSIA BEGAN ON TUESDAY AND IS ATTENDED BY ABOUT 200 LOCAL AND FOREIGN MEDICAL SPECIALISTS IN SURGERY, GENERAL PRACTICE AND MEDICINE. -- MORE
1213MST 28 07 88

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R E062 AAE
MAHATHIR - SCHEME 2 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE PRESENT SERVICE WAS COLONIAL INHERITED, DESIGNED ORIGINALLY TO PROVIDE FREE HEALTHCARE FOR EXPATRIATE OFFICERS.

+WHEN MEDICINE COSTS 10 SEN A BOTTLE, THE EXTENSION OF THIS FREE SERVICE TO ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND THEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC WAS NOT CONSIDERED MUCH OF A BURDEN ON THE GOVERNMENT.

+BUT TODAY WHEN ONE CAPSULE MAY COST \$3 AND AN OPERATION THOUSANDS OF RINGGIT, THE BURDEN HAS BECOME QUITE UNBEARABLE,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT THROUGH AN INSURANCE SCHEME, VAST SUMS OF MONEY COULD BE ACCUMULATED TO MAINTAIN FACILITIES AND PROVIDE HEALTHCARE FOR VAST NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORS.

SUCH FUNDS COULD EASILY KEEP UP WITH THE SOPHISTICATION AND COSTS OF MODERN MEDICINE AND COULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE TOTAL NATIONAL SAVINGS, A FACTOR OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE CREATION OF A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL, HE ADDED. -- MORE
1232MST 28 07 88

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R E066 AAE
MAHATHIR - SCHEME 3 KUALA LUMPUR

HE STRESSED THAT A NON-CONTRIBUTORY MEDICAL SERVICE EVEN BY THE RICHEST GOVERNMENTS COULD NOT MEET THE DEMANDS OF DOCTORS FOR THE VERY LATEST EQUIPMENTS, REGARDLESS OF COST, INDEFINITELY.

+WE ARE AWARE THAT THEY ARE ONLY THINKING OF THEIR PATIENTS BUT GOVERNMENTS HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES AS WELL,+ HE SAID.

ON CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS PLACED GREAT EMPHASIS IN IT WHEREBY HOSPITALS HAD BEEN ENCOURGED TO ORGANISE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THEIR STAFF.

DOCTORS HAD ALSO BEEN SPONSORED TO ATTEND CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND SPECIALISED COURSES CONDUCTED LOCALLY AND ABROAD TO IMPROVE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS.

APPROACHED BY REPORTERS LATER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, SAID IT WAS UP TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO FOLLOW UP ON THE SUGGESTION FOR THE HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME. -- MORE

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MAHATHIR - SCHEME 4 KUALA LUMPUR

TO A QUESTION, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD STILL RUN HOSPITALS TO PROVIDE FREE HEALTHCARE FOR THE LOWER INCOME GROUP +BUT WE CANNOT BE RUNNING HOSPITALS FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN AFFORD TO PAY.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT IMPOSE ANY QUOTA ON THE SETTING UP OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS OR CLINICS BUT THEIR NEED WOULD DEPEND ON THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND SITUATION.

THE MEETING WHICH WAS STARTED IN 1980 PROVIDED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR MALAYSIAN MEDICAL SPECIALISTS TO MEET AND INTERACT WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES FROM ABROAD.

AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS ARE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IRELAND DR DESMOND KNEAFSEY, PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS DR BARRY GRIMMOND AND THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS OF SINGAPORE DR KOH ENG KHENG. -- BERNAMA

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