

R E257 AAE

MAHATHIR-POISONING (CORRECTED REPETITION TO FIGURE IN PARAS ONE AND FIVE)

88

②

IPON, OCT 24, (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY SAID THE GOVERNMENT WILL SPARE NO EFFORTS AND EXPENDITURE TO GET TO THE ROOT OF THE POISONING INCIDENT WHICH HAS SO FAR KILLED 11 CHILDREN.

+IF THE DOCTORS HERE FEEL WE NEED FOREIGN EXPERTS TO COME HERE TO FIND THE SOURCE OF THE POISONING, WE WILL FLY THEM (THE EXPERTS) IN,+ HE SAID.

+THE GOVERNMENT WILL EXTEND EVERY HELP TO FIND THE SOURCE OF THE POISONING FAST AND TO TREAT THE VICTIMS,+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER VISITING SIX VICTIMS WHO ARE WARDED IN THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT OF THE GENERAL HOSPITAL HERE.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR. SITI HASMAN ALI, HEALTH MINISTER DATUK CHAN SIANG SUN, HIS DEPUTY, DATUK K. PATHMANABAN, PERAK MENTERI BESAR DATUK SERI SANLI MEAH TALIB AND HIS WIFE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT VIEWED THE POISONING CASES VERY SERIOUSLY AS 11 CHILDREN HAD DIED. -- MORE (ENOS CORRECTED REPETITION).

2254HST 24 10 88

U E242 AAE

MAHATHIR-POISONING 2 IPON

THE GOVERNMENT WANT'S TO KNOW WHAT CAUSED THE DEATHS AND THE SOURCE OF THE POISONING, HE ADDED.

HE SAID THE HEALTH AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN WORKING VERY HARD BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO PIN POINT THE SOURCE OF THE POISONING.

+THEY HAVE SOME IDEAS THAT THEY ARE LOOKING INTO WHICH INCLUDES FOOD POISONING,+ HE SAID.

ASKED IF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE THE VICTIMS ANY AID, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY BEARING THE COST OF TREATING THEM WHICH RAN INTO +TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RINGGIT EXCLUDING THE DOCTORS SALARIES+.

+IF THESE VICTIMS WERE IN SOME OTHER COUNTRIES, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO AFFORD THE TREATMENT. BUT HERE WE ARE TREATING THEM REGARDLESS WHETHER THEY CAN AFFORD TO PAY OR NOT,+ HE SAID.

+WE DO NOT ASK PEOPLE TO PAY FOR TREATMENT IF THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO. WE PRESENTLY RUN A NON-CONTRIBUTING HEALTH SCHEME HERE.+ --MORE

1926HST 24 10 88

U E243 AAE

MAHATHIR-POISONING 3 IPON

ASKED IF THE POISONING CASES HAD HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR STRICTER CHECKS TO ENSURE MANUFACTURERS PREPARE THEIR FOOD UNDER HYGIENIC CONDITIONS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID SUCH CHECKS WERE AN ONGOING PROCESS BUT +IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CHECK ON THEM ALL THE TIME.+

THE MANUFACTURERS AND THE PUBLIC THEMSELVES MUST BE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO PREPARE FOOD, ESPECIALLY THAT OF LARGE QUANTITIES, UNDER HYGIENIC CONDITIONS, HE SAID.

TO ANOTHER QUESTION, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY INITIATED MOVES TO SET UP A POISON CENTRE IN UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA ALTHOUGH AT THE MOMENT IT COULD MAKE USE OF SIMILAR CENTRES IN SINGAPORE AND ELSEWHERE.

ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DECLARE AN EPIDEMIC IN THE STATE, HE SAID +PEOPLE ARE ALREADY VERY CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE TYPE OF FOOD THEY CONSUMED.+ --BERNAMA

1932HST 24 10 88