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MAHATHIR-POVERTY
BM

KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 13 (BERNAMA) -- THE PRIME MINISTER TODAY EXPOUNDED ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ANODYNE AND A REAL CURE IN EFFORTS TO ERADICATE POVERTY AMONG FARMERS.

HE SAID THE CURE FOR POVERTY AMONG FARMERS, CONSIDERED THE COUNTRY'S MOST POVERTY-STRICKEN GROUP, LIE IN TACKLING THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM -- FARMING ON UNECONOMIC SIZE OF LAND.

AND TO CURE THE PROBLEM AT ROOT, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SUGGESTED FARMERS MERGE THEIR SMALL PLOTS INTO BIGGER AREAS.

THE PROVISION OF SUBSIDIES, FERTILISERS AND MACHINERY BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER HAND COULD NOT OVERCOME THE ROOT OF THEIR POVERTY BUT WAS ONLY AN ANODYNE WHICH REDUCED THEIR BURDEN, ACCORDING TO HIM.

+IF A PERSON SUFFERS FROM PAINS IN THE HEAD, THESE CAN BE EASED BY MEDICINE FOR HEADACHE, BUT THE PAINS WILL DEFINITELY RETURN BECAUSE THEIR SOURCE, SUCH AS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE OR CANCER OF THE BRAIN, IS NOT TREATED, HE SAID WHEN OPENING A MAIZE EXHIBITION AT MUZIUM NEGARA HERE.

THE 20-DAY EXHIBITION IS ORGANISED BY THE AGRICULTURE MINISTRY WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTRY AND MUZIUM NEGARA. -- MORE

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THE SAME APPLIED TO POVERTY FACED BY THE COUNTRY'S FARMERS, SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, IN EXPANDING ON HIS MEDICAL ALLEGORY.

POVERTY WAS THE +SYMPTOM+ OF THE ACTUAL +DISEASE+ -- UNECONOMIC SIZE OF LAND WORKED.

HE SAID ESTATE-STYLE FARMING MANAGED EFFICIENTLY BY PROFESSIONALS COULD CUT DOWN PRODUCTION COSTS AND INCREASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NATION'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR ALONG THESE LINES WAS CONFINED ONLY TO AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES SUCH AS RUBBER, OIL PALM AND COCOA, HE SAID.

THE FOOD-PRODUCTION SIDE WAS STILL ADMINISTERED UNDER THE OLD WAYS ON PLOTS OF LAND WHOSE AREA WAS SMALL AND WHICH WAS UNABLE TO GIVE REASONABLE ECONOMIC RETURNS.

+AS A RESULT, FARMERS IN THIS COUNTRY ARE STILL CONSIDERED THE POOREST GROUP ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOW NOT AS POOR AS IN THE PAST,+ HE ADDED. -- MORE

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MAHATHIR-POVERTY 3 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID: +THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT INTEND TO SEIZE THE LAND OF ANY GROUP BUT WE CANNOT REMEDY THE SITUATION WITHOUT RADICAL CHANGES.-- EVEN TEARS OF BLOOD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE THE LOT OF FARMERS IF THEY DO NOT ACCEPT CHANGES.+

HE SAID IF THE FARMERS DID NOT WANT TO PRACTISE ESTATE-STYLE AGRICULTURE, NEW ESTATES SHOULD BE SET UP NEAR THE SMALL FARMING PLOTS SO ASSISTANCE COULD BE CHANNELLED TO THESE AREAS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID THAT IN EFFORTS BY THE COUNTRY TO PRODUCE MORE FOOD TO REDUCE IMPORTS, CARE MUST BE GIVEN TO THE SELECTION OF THE TYPES OF FOOD TO BE PRODUCED SO AS NOT TO CREATE PROBLEMS OF TRADE IMBALANCE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

ON COMMERCIAL SCALE CULTIVATION OF MAIZE, HE SAID THERE WAS POTENTIAL AS SUGAR AND COOKING OIL COULD BE EXTRACTED FROM MAIZE BUT ADDED SUCH INDUSTRIES SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT ON A COST-EFFICIENT BASIS TO COMPETE IN THE OUTSIDE MARKET.

PRESENT AT THE FUNCTION WERE AGRICULTURE MINISTER DATUK SERI SANUSI JUNID AND CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTER DATUK SABBARUDDIN CHIK. -- BERNAMA

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