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U E476 AAE BMX
MAHATHIR-STUDENTS
BY WAN A HULAIMI

LONDON, MAY 28 (BERNAMA)-- THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ARE QUICK TO LAY THE BLAME FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHILE NOT ENOUGH ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS CAUSED BY THEIR OWN ACTIVITIES, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TOLD MALAYSIAN STUDENTS HERE.

DR MAHATHIR MADE THIS BROAD ATTACK ON THE FAILURE OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD TO RECOGNISE THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AT A SPECIAL HARI RAYA GATHERING YESTERDAY ORGANISED BY THE MALAYSIAN STUDENTS DEPARTMENT ON THE OCCASION OF HIS PRIVATE VISIT HERE.

A QUESTION FROM ONE OF THE STUDENTS ON HIS VIEW ON THE DAMAGE TO THE OZONE LAYER PROVIDED HIM WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO CASTIGATE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD.

+WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE OZONE LAYER. BUT THE TENDENCY IS FOR DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO BLAME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THEY SAY IT IS CAUSED BY OUR EXPLOITATION OF OUR FORESTS, BUT THEY FORGET THE USE OF CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CFCS), WHICH IS ONE OF THE MAJOR CAUSES,+ HE SAID.

HE ASKED THE STUDENTS WHY THERE WERE DEMONSTRATIONS ABOUT MALAYSIAN FORESTS BUT NOT ABOUT THE USE OF CFCS BY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES= AND ALSO WHY THERE WERE NO DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE BIGGER FOREST AREAS COMMERCIALY EXPLOITED IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN CANADA. -- MORE

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TURNING HIS ATTENTION TOWARDS HOME, DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT SOME SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS IN MALAYSIA TOO JOINED THEIR (OVERSEAS) FRIENDS IN DEMONSTRATING AGAINST MALAYSIA.

+THEY ARE TOO HAPPY TO CONDEMN THEIR OWN COUNTRY BUT THEY NEVER CRITICISE OTHER COUNTRIES. THIS IS REGRETTABLE,+ HE SAID.

WHILE ON A HELICOPTER TRIP TO NORWICH (IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND) EARLIER IN THE DAY HE NOTICED THE LACK OF FORESTS IN ENGLAND, HE SAID, YET THEY WERE TELLING US NOT TO CUT DOWN MALAYSIAN FORESTS BECAUSE OF THE THREAT TO THE OZONE LAYER.

HE TOLD THE STUDENTS THAT HE TOO WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT HE DID NOT CARE VERY MUCH FOR +FALSE ENVIRONMENTALISTS+ WHOSE ATTACKS ON MALAYSIA WERE A PLOY TO CURB COMPETITION AGAINST THEIR OWN TRADE IN SOFT-WOOD.

IN MALAYSIA +WE ARE CAREFUL TO CUT DOWN ONLY MATURE TREES,+ HE SAID, YET MALAYSIA ALONE WAS SINGLED OUT FOR ATTACK, BUT NOT THAILAND OR THE PHILIPPINES WHICH WERE ALSO CUTTING DOWN THEIR FORESTS. -- MORE

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HE SAID THAT THESE ENVIRONMENTALISTS ALSO WANTED TO PRESERVE THE LIFESTYLE OF THE PENANS IN SARAWAK, WHOSE LIVES WERE INADEQUATE IN MANY WAYS AND WHO HAD A LIFESPAN OF ABOUT 40 YEARS WHILE IN OTHER PARTS OF MALAYSIA PEOPLE LIVED TO ABOUT 60.

+THEY THEMSELVES WOULD NOT WANT TO LIVE LIKE THAT, -YET THEY TELL US TO LET THE PENANS TO CONTINUE TO DO SO,+ DR MAHATHIR CONTINUED.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT IN SABAH AND SARAWAK WHERE SHIFTING CULTIVATION, WHICH INVOLVED THE CUTTING DOWN AND BURNING OF TREES, WAS PRACTISED.

HE SAID: +WE ARE TRYING TO STOP THIS KIND OF SHIFTING CULTIVATION. WE IN MALAYSIA ARE TRYING TO SAVE THE FOREST, NOT THOSE WHO ARE DEMONSTRATING.+

EARLIER, HE TOLD THE STUDENTS THAT MALAYSIA HAD A MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT WELL BEFORE OTHER COUNTRIES, AND ITS CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT WAS SHOWN, FOR EXAMPLE, BY ITS STAND TO MAKE ANTARCTICA +A GLOBAL COMMON+.

NOW AUSTRALIA, FOR INSTANCE, WHICH EARLIER OPPOSED MALAYSIA'S STAND AGAINST MINERAL EXPLOITATION THERE, WAS BEGINNING TO SEE +OUR POINT OF VIEW AS A RESULT OF THE RECENT ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IN ALASKA+.-- MORE

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IN HIS SPEECH AND IN THE SUBSEQUENT DIALOGUE, DR MAHATHIR SPOKE ON THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY, MALAYSIA'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN MALAYSIA, HIS MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER THATCHER AS WELL AS HIS RECENT BRIEF MEETING IN THE UNITED STATES WITH PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH.

DR MAHATHIR PRAISED DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH FOR THE ROLE SHE PLAYED IN HIS CAREER, AND FOR THE +VERY IMPORTANT+ SUPPORT HE RECEIVED FROM HER.

THIS TRIBUTE TO DR HASMAH WAS MADE WHEN HE WAS ASKED BY A STUDENT IF HE WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON THE SAYING THAT A WOMAN WAS BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL MAN.

DR MAHATHIR REPLIED: +SHE IS NOT BEHIND ME. FORTUNATELY OR UNFORTUNATELY SHE IS MOSTLY AT MY SIDE. WE WORK TOGETHER.+

WHILE DR SITI HASMAH, WHO WAS SITTING BEHIND HIM, COULD BE SEEN BEAMING IN EMBARRASSMENT, DR MAHATHIR CONTINUED BY SAYING THAT IN MALAYSIAN SOCIETY THE ROLE OF THE WIFE WAS VERY IMPORTANT IN POLITICS.

IF THE WIFE DISTANCED HERSELF FROM THE POLITICIAN HUSBAND, HE COULD BECOME UNPOPULAR, HE SAID.

+FORTUNATELY FOR ME MY WIFE UNDERSTANDS, ALTHOUGH SHE HERSELF WOULD RATHER HAVE MORE TIME TO BE WITH THE CHILDREN,+ HE ADDED. --
BERNAMA

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