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KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 15 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THE GOVERNMENT ACTUALLY DOES NOT ASPIRE TO MAKE MALAYSIA A NEWLY INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRY (NIC) AS IT REALISES THAT ONCE THE COUNTRY HAS ACHIEVED SUCH STATUS IT WILL BE PRESSURED BY THE DEVELOPED AND RICH COUNTRIES.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT GAVE GREATER PRIORITY TO PROVIDING A BETTER STANDARD OF LIVING TO THE PEOPLE RATHER THAN GETTING NIC STATUS FOR THE COUNTRY,

OPENING THE 19TH TRIENNIAL DELEGATES CONFERENCE OF THE MALAYSIAN TECHNICAL SERVICES UNION (MTSU) HERE, HE SAID: +IN FACT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT AIM FOR NIC STATUS (FOR MALAYSIA) AS IT REALISES THAT IF IT WERE TO ACHIEVE THAT STATUS, WE WILL BE PRESSURED TO THE CORE BY THE DEVELOPED AND RICH COUNTRIES.+

HE SAID IT WAS IMMATERIAL WHETHER THE COUNTRY JOINED THE RANKS OF THE NEWLY INDUSTRIALISED NATIONS OR REMAINED A DEVELOPING COUNTRY PROVIDED THE PEOPLE LED A PROSPEROUS LIFE.

THE COUNTRY WOULD FACE MAJOR PROBLEMS IF IT BECAME AN NIC, HE ADDED. - - MORE

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IF MALAYSIA WERE TO BECOME A NIC IT WOULD LOSE OUT ON THE FACILITIES AND BENEFITS XT CURRENTLY ENJOYED AS A DEVELOPING COUNTRY, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.'

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE TERM NIC WAS AT PRESENT SO POPULAR THAT MANY ECONOMISTS AND TRADE UNION AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WERE TALKING ABOUT MALAYSIA'S WISH TO BECOME AN NIC LIKE SOUTH KOREA, TAIWAN AND SINGAPORE.

HE SAID IF NIC STATUS WAS ACHIEVED, THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WOULD COMPEL THE COUNTRY TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF ITS CURRENCY TO THE EXTENT ITS EXPORTS COULD NOT COMPETE WITH THEIRS, FORCE IT TO CUT DOWN ON EXPORTS AND RESTRICT GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES TO ANY GROUP.

+IN SHORT THEY WILL STRIVE HARD SO THAT IT WE CANNOT RAISE OUR HEADS? WHAT MORE FROM BECOMING A DEVELOPED COUNTRY.+

+EVEN THOUGH WE TALK ABOUT MALAYSIA'S INTENTION OF BECOMING A DEVELOPED COUNTRY, WE SHOULD REALISE THAT ONCE WE COME UP THEY WILL RESTRICT US SO THAT WE CANNOT GO UP,+ HE SAID. -- MORE ,

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MAHATHIR-NIC 3 KUALA LUMPUR

THE PRIME MINISTER REMINDED ALL GROUPS, PARTICULARLY JOURNALISTS, NOT TO GO ALL OUT TO PROJECT THE YEARNING TO BECOME A NEWLY INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRY.

ON THE CLAIMS BY TRADE UNIONS FOR SALARY ADJUSTMENTS AND BETTER SERVICE SCHEME, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE INTEREST OF ALL THE PEOPLE AND THE NATION WHEN DECIDING ON THE CLAIMS.

HE SAID EVEN THOUGH AS A POLITICIAN, HE NEEDED AS MUCH SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE FROM THE PEOPLE, HE DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS ACCORDING TO HIS WHIMS AND FANCIES AS THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD NOT ONLY BE BORNE BY HIM BUT ALSO THE ENTIRE NATION AND PEOPLE.

+DECISION SHOULD NOT BE BASED ON POPULARITY AND POSITION BUT ON THE EFFECT SUCH DECISIONS WILL HAVE,+ HE SAID.

THOUGH THE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE FAVOURED SUPPORT FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE INCLUDING FARMERS, FISHERMEN AND WORKERS, NEVERTHELESS HE COULD NOT MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON POPULARITY MERELY TO RETAIN HIS POSITION. -- MORE
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MAHATHIR-NIC 4 KUALA LUMPUR

ON THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO SPEED UP NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE INCENTIVES TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO CREATE AS MANY JOBS AS POSSIBLE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT TO TUNE THE ECONOMY TOWARDS RAPID INDUSTRIALISATION THERE WAS A NEED FOR INCREASED WORKFORCE IN CERTAIN AREAS SUCH AS ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT, TECHNICAL AND OTHER HIGHLY SKILLED FIELDS.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAILORED THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM FROM SECONDARY LEVEL TOWARDS MEETING THESE NEEDS, HE SAID.

SO FAR THE PRODUCTS OF THIS EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM HAD INDEED BEEN ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS, HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS CONCERNED OVER THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE EVEN THOUGH MANY JOBS HAD BEEN CREATED FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES TO INVESTORS IN THE INDUSTRIAL FIELD.

HE SAID THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED SHOULD DECREASE JUDGING FROM THE NUMBER OF VACANCIES PUBLISHED BY THE NEWSPAPERS DAILY. -- MORE
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MAHATHIR-NIC 5 KUALA LUMPUR

UNEMPLOYMENT WAS STILL PREVALENT BECAUSE MANY PEOPLE WERE TOO CHOOSY ABOUT JOBS AND WHERE THEY WORKED AND WERE UNWILLING TO LEAVE THEIR HOMETOWNS OR KAMPUNGS IN SEARCH OF WORK, HE SAID.

SPEAKING AT THE FUNCTION, MTSU PRESIDENT ALIAS MOHAMAD ALI URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE TECHNICAL FACILITIES FOR TECHNICAL STAFF IN EFFORTS TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER LATED PRESENTED A GOLD MEDAL AND CERTIFICATE OF MERIT TO OUTGOING MTSU SECRETARY-GENERAL A. RAGUNATHAN, WHO IS RETIRING.

PRESENT WERE CUEPACS PRESIDENT MOHAMAD ABAS AND MTUC PRESIDENT ZAINAL RAMPAK. -- BERNAMA
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