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U E100 ENG MES AAE
REPTN CORRECTING LAST PARA
MAHATHIR-ISLAM R R R
BM

BUTTERWORTH, DEC 1 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER FORCED ANYONE TO EMBRACE ISLAM. THOSE WHO EMBRACED THE RELIGION DID SO ON THEIR OWN FREE WILL, HE SAID.

NO ONE SHOULD FEAR THE RULING GOVERNMENT AS IT HAD NEVER DISCRIMINATED AGAINST ANYONE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

+DURING THE 32 YEARS IT HAS RULED THE COUNTRY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER FORCED NON-MUSLIMS TO CONVERT TO ISLAM,+ HE SAID WHEN OPENING THE JAMEK MOSQUE IN PONGSU SERIBU, KEPALA BATAS, NEAR HERE TODAY.

HE SAID CITIZENS OF THE COUNTRY WERE FREE TO PRACTICE ANY RELIGION AND THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS BEEN TOLERANT IN THIS MATTER, UNLIKE IN CERTAIN OTHER COUNTRIES.

THIS TOLERANCE WAS OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO THE COUNTRY AND IT WOULD BE PRESERVED BECAUSE ADOPTING SUCH AN APPROACH ENABLED THE NATION TO BE RUN PEACEFULLY, HE SAID.-- MORE
1754MST 01 12 89

U E109 ENG MES AAE
MAHATHIR-ISLAM 2 BUTTERWORTH R R R

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD WANTED TO COMPEL THE OTHER COMMUNITIES TO EMBRACE ISLAM, IT COULD HAVE DONE SO LONG AGO BUT THE RECORDS SHOWED THAT IT HAD NOT FORCED ANYONE.

HE SAID MALAYSIANS WERE ABLE TO LIVE PEACEFULLY BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAD NEVER BEEN GREEDY FOR OR HAD ABUSED POWER.

HE SAID THERE WERE COUNTRIES WITH LARGER BUT INSECURE MUSLIM POPULATION AND IN FACT HAD BROKEN AWAY FROM ISLAMIC TEACHINGS SUCH AS IN STATES IN SOUTHERN RUSSIA.

+ALTHOUGH MUSLIMS IN THIS COUNTRY ENJOY A GOOD POSITION, THEY DO NOT ABUSE POWER TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST OTHER RELIGIONS OR COMMUNITIES BECAUSE ISLAM IS A TOLERANT FAITH,+ SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR.

ON MOSQUES, HE SAID THEY SHOULD BE USED NOT ONLY FOR WORSHIP BUT ALSO FOR COMMUNITY GATHERINGS TO DISCUSS AND SOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS AS WELL AS CONSOLIDATE MUSLIM UNITY.-- MORE
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U E110 ENG MES AAE
MAHATHIR-ISLAM 3 BUTTERWORTH R R R

HE SAID DIVISIVE ELEMENTS IN SOCIETY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED IN MOSQUES WHILE PROPAGATION OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS MUST BE DONE NOT FOR SELF-INTERESTS.

ALSO PRESENT AT THE OPENING OF THE MOSQUE WHICH COST MORE THAN \$260,000 WERE EDUCATION MINISTER ANWAR IBRAHIM AND DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER SENATOR MOHAMAD FARID ARIFFIN. -- BERNAMA
1827MST 01 12 89