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PARLIAMENT-MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 7 (BERNAMA) -- FAMILIES IN THE +VERY POOR+ CATEGORY BEING GIVEN SPECIAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE ARE THOSE WITH MONTHLY PER CAPITA INCOME OF \$35 OR LESS THAN \$175 PER FAMILY, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THIS GROUP SHOULD BE GIVEN GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE BECAUSE THEY WE-RE TOTALLY INCAPBLE OF EARNING AN INCOME ON THEIR OWN, HE SAID IN REPLY TO A SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION FROM ENCIK LEE LAM THYE (DAP-BUKIT BINTANG) IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT HERE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT FAMILIES WITH INCOME OF LESS THAN \$300 COULD NOT BE CATEGORISED AS +VERY POOR+ BECAUSE THEY WERE OTHER POORER PEOPLE.

+EVEN A PERSON WITH AN INCOME OF \$11000 PER MONTH SOMETIMES ADMITS TO BEING POOR,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT BIAS TOWARDS A CERTAIN RACE IN THE GRANTING OF THE ALLOCATION FOR THE +VERY POOR+ TOTALLING \$391 MILLION.

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TO AN ORIGINAL QUESTION FROM DATUK HAJI MOHAMED ABU BAKAR RAUTIN IBRAHIM (BN-KUALA KEDAH), THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE RATE OF POVERTY IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA HAD BEEN REDUCED FROM 49.3 PERCENT IN 1970 TO 17.3 PERCENT IN 1987.

HE SAID THAT THE RATE OF POVERTY IN SABAH HAD BEEN REDUCED FROM 58.3 PERCENT IN 1976 TO 35.3 PERCENT IN 1987 AND FOR SARAWAK, THE RATE HAD ALSO BEEN REDUCED FROM 56.5 PERCENT IN 1976 TO 24.7 PERCENT IN 1987.

TO ENSURE THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE REALLY REACHED THE TARGET GROUP, A LIST OF THE FAMILIES IN THE +VERY POOR+ CATEGORY SHOULD BE DRAWN UP IN EACH DISTRICT AND ONLY THOSE WHO QUALISFIED ACCORDING TO THE SET CRITERIA WOULD BE GIVEN THE ASSISTANCE, HE ADDED.

THE POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMME LAUNCHED THIS YEAR IS AIMED AT REDUCING THE RATE OF POVERTY TO AT LEAST 17 PERCENT NEXT YEAR.

HE SAID THAT AMONG THE STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO ERADICATE POVERTY WAS TO DEVELOP NEW LAND SCHEMES, REGIONS AND RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS, CARRY OUT REHABILITATION OF LAND AND REPLANTING, IMPLEMENT INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERY, AND PROVIDE SOCIAL SERVICES AND BASIC AMENITIES. -- BERNAMA

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