

DD21

U E597 AAE
MAHATHIR-POLICY R'R'R'
EMBARGO: FOR USE AFTER 6 P.M. TODAY
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BY ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 28 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD DECLARED TODAY THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE INTO THE NINETIES THE VARIOUS POLICIES INITIATED EARLIER AS THEY HAD BEEN FOUND TO BE BENEFICIAL TO THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE.

HE SAID IT WAS THE DESIRE OF EVERY MALAYSIAN TO BE BETTER THAN WHAT THEY WERE TODAY, TO BE RESPECTED, TO BE PROSPEROUS AND TO LIVE IN A WELL-ADMINISTRATED COUNTRY.

+I DON'T KNOW ABOUT VISION. PEOPLE KEEP TALKING ABOUT MY VISION. IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE DESIRE OF EVERY MALAYSIAN TO BE BETTER THAN WHAT THEY ARE TODAY, TO BE RESPECTED, TO BE MORE PROSPEROUS, TO LIVE IN A WELL-ADMINISTERED COUNTRY, TO HAVE POLITICAL STABILITYTHIS IS EVERY BODY'S DESIRE.+

+IT IS EVERYBODY'S WISH TO SEE THESE THINGS HAPPEN. I'M MERELY PUTTING IN THE WORDS SO THERE IS NO VISION AS SUCH,+ HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER MADE THESE OBSERVATIONS IN A YEAR-END INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR LOCAL EDITORS AT HIS OFFICE HERE.

DURING THE TWO-HOUR INTERVIEW, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR CANDIDLY ANSWERED QUESTIONS COVERING WIDE-RANGING SUBJECTS INCLUDING HIS PURPORTED CHANGE OF ATTITUDE FOLLOWING HIS BY-PASS OPERATION EARLY THIS YEAR, HIS PERCEPTION OF THE NEXT POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF THE WORLD, THE UPS AND DOWNS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION SO FAR AND HIS ASSESSMENT OF HIS CABINET MINISTERS AND THE MENTERIS BESAR AND CHIEF MINISTERS. -- MORE

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MAHATHIR-POLICY 2 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO TALKED ABOUT THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY, CORRUPTION, THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT, HIS POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR AND THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS.

THE FULL TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW IS REPRODUCED SEPARATELY.

DURING THE INTERVIEW, THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ASKED TO MAKE HIS OWN ASSESSMENT OF HIS ADMINISTRATION SO FAR, PARTICULARLY HIS INTENTION OF WANTING TO MAKE MALAYSIA WELL-RESPECTED INTERNATIONALLY.

HE SAID, +IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO ASSESS THIS. BUT FROM REPORTS, I THINK MALAYSIA IS NOW BETTER KNOWN CERTAINLY. IT IS ALSO AS A RESULT OF OUR BEING IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH WE WERE ABLE TO GET ELECTED WITH A VERY STRONG SUPPORT FROM COUNTRIES WHICH OTHERWISE DO NOT KNOW US, LIKE THE SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES WHICH ARE AMONG OUR STRONGEST SUPPORTERS.+

+THE MAJORITY THAT WE GOT SHOWED THAT MALAYSIA IS CERTAINLY BETTER KNOWN AND I THINK THERE MUST BE A CERTAIN DEGREE OF RESPECT FOR THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO GET ELECTED TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL+ HE ADDED.

HE SAID IN VIEW OF THIS, HE DID NOT SEE ANY REASON WHY THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT CONTINUE MAINTAINING A SLIGHTLY HIGHER PROFILE INTERNATIONALLY TO PUT ACROSS ITS VIEWS.

HE REITERATED THAT OF THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, MALAYSIA WAS THE LEAST KNOWN.-- MORE

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Q: DATUK SERI. SO THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT WE CAN REMOVE THE SPECTRE OF ISA ONCE THE CONDITIONS PERMIT?

DR M: YES. IF THE PEOPLE KNOW HOW TO HOLD THEMSELVES BACK, THERE IS NO PROBLEM. SOME COUNTRIES DO NOT EVEN NEED GOVERNMENTS, ACTUALLY, THEY CAN FUNCTION WITHOUT GOVERNMENTS BUT SOME NEED VERY STRONG AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENTS TO KEEP THEM IN CHECK. IT'S ALL VERY WELL TO SAY WE SHOULD HAVE A DEMOCRACY, BUT JUST LOOK AT SOME DEMOCRACIES...WHERE PEOPLE ARE MURDERED EVERYDAY, SNIPERS IN THE CITIES, ETC.

Q: DATUK SERI, YOU'VE BEEN IDENTIFIED VERY CLOSELY WITH PROTON, WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS OF PROTON?

DR M: WE WANT TO EXPAND PROTON, WE WANT TO MARKET THE CAR IN MORE COUNTRIES. I MUST SAY WE ARE VERY SURPRISED BY ITS SUCCESS IN BRITAIN. WE THINK THAT THERE IS A POTENTIAL TO EXPORT THE CAR TO OTHER COUNTRIES. BUT AGAIN IT WOULD INVOLVE INVESTMENTS, IT WOULD INVOLVE TAKING RISKS. EVENTUALLY IT MAY SUCCEED. PEOPLE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT UNLESS WE TAKE RISKS WE ARE NOT GOING TO GET ANYWHERE. PROTON WAS A RISK. IT SO HAPPENED THAT IT WAS PLANNED WHEN THINGS WERE GOOD. WHEN IT WAS COMPLETED THINGS WERE VERY BAD BUT WE WERE ABLE TO WEATHER IT FOR A FEW YEARS, SO IT'S OKAY NOW. BUT WE HAVE ALSO ADMITTED TO OURSELVES THAT WE HAVE A WEAK MANAGEMENT AND WE HAD TO STRENGTHEN THE MANAGEMENT. NOW WE HAVE LOCALS UNDERSTUDYING THE JAPANESE MANAGERS. BUT YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT THE JAPANESE WHO IS RUNNING IT IS 67 YEARS OLD, WITH ALL THE EXPERIENCE THAT IT MEANS. BUT THE UNDERSTUDY IS ONLY UNDER 40 YEARS OLD, SO WE HAVE TO BE PATIENT. IT IS NOT A SMALL THING TO RUN, SOMETIMES WE THINK IT IS AND JUST ANYBODY CAN RUN A FACTORY LIKE THAT. IF YOU JUST LOOK AT THE NUMBER OF COMPONENTS THAT GO INTO THE MAKING OF A CAR, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND HOW COMPLEX IT IS. THE MANAGER MUST KNOW PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING. WE DIDN'T RUSH INTO THIS THING BECAUSE BY THE TIME WE ANNOUNCED IT WE HAD HAD TWO AND A HALF YEARS OF VERY DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE JAPANESE. PEOPLE THINK THAT IT WAS A DECISION ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT. WE HAVE TO THINK VERY HARD. WE TRIED TO GO WITH DAIHATSU AT FIRST BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.

Q: WHEN ARE WE GOING TO ENTER THE US MARKET?

DR M: THAT AS YOU KNOW INVOLVES SWITCHING FROM THE RIGHT HAND DRIVE TO THE LEFT AND THAT IN ITSELF IS A VERY BIG EXERCISE, SO WE ARE STUDYING. I DON'T THINK WE ARE GOING TO THE US MARKET JUST YET. THERE'S STILL THE EUROPEAN MARKET AND LOTS OF OTHER MARKETS WHICH WE HAVE NOT TRIED. WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE OUR PRESENT DEALER IN THE UK WHO DOES NOT MIND SPENDING A LOT OF MONEY FOR PROMOTION AND HE DOES VERY GOOD PROMOTION. HERE WE HAVE A CAPTIVE MARKET BUT THERE HE HAS TO COMPETE AND HE HAS BEATEN EVERY OTHER CAR. NO NEW CAR INTRODUCED IN BRITAIN HAS BEEN ABLE TO SELL AS MANY IN THAT PERIOD OF TIME AS THE PROTON SAGA, DOUBLE THAN ANY OTHER CAR COMPARED TO HYUNDAI, MITSUBISHI, FIAT, LADA. HE WANTED TO BUY 5,000 CARS IN THE FIRST YEAR AND ENDED UP BUYING 10,000 CARS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. HE COMES HERE OFTEN AND IS VERY CLOSE TO THE LOCAL PLANT WORKERS. ONE NIGHT HE BROUGHT ALL THE WORKERS FOR DINNER AT HAWKER STALLS HERE.

--BERNAMA

1057MST 28 12 89

D024

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MAHATHIR-POLICY 3 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

HE SAID EVERYBODY KNEW THAILAND, INDONESIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND EVEN BRUNEI WHILE MALAYSIA WAS SOMETIMES MISTAKEN FOR SOME COUNTRY IN CHINA OR AFRICA.

+OF COURSE TO A LOT OF PEOPLE, WHETHER IT IS MALAWI OR MALAYSIA THERE IS NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE, SO THIS POLICY WILL CONTINUE,+ HE SAID.

ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID ALTHOUGH IT WAS BETTER FOR OTHERS TO MAKE ASSESSMENT FROM THE OUTSIDE, IT WAS A FACT THAT THE AVERAGE MALAYSIANS TODAY WERE MUCH BETTER OFF.

STATISTICS SHOWED THAT POVERTY RATE HAD GONE DOWN CONSIDERABLY AND PEOPLE NOW LIVED A BETTER LIFE.

+ONE REMARK I GOT FROM FOREIGN OBSERVERS IS THAT MALAYSIANS LOOK WELL-FED. THERE ARE OTHER REMARKS WHICH SHOW THAT WE SEEM TO HAVE ACHIEVED GOOD RATE OF GROWTH. WE HAVE ACHIEVED AT LEAST PART OF THE TARGET,+ HE EXPLAINED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID AS THE COUNTRY'S POTENTIAL WAS SO GREAT, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO ACCELERATE FURTHER GROWTH.

HOWEVER, TO ACHIEVE THIS, HE SAID, THE PEOPLE MUST HAVE THE CORRECT ATTITUDE.

IT WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO WANT TO DO SOMETHING IF THE PEOPLE WERE NOT WILLING TO PLACE THEMSELVES IN A POSITION TO ACHIEVE THE TARGET SET. -- MORE

1105MST 28 12 89

D025

U E600 AAE
MAHATHIR-POLICY 4 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

ON HIS OWN PERSONAL POPULARITY WHICH IS NOW SAID TO BE ON THE RISE AGAIN AFTER UNDERGOING A PERIOD OF DECLINE FOLLOWING A GOOD START AND HOW HE MANAGED TO FACE ALL THE CHALLENGES ALL THIS WHILE, HE SAID:

+IT IS NOT THE QUESTION OF MANAGEMENT. IT IS THE NORMAL REACTION OF ANY COMMUNITY TO CHANGE ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT COMMUNITY HAS NOT BEEN SUBJECT TO RADICAL CHANGE FOR A LONG TIME AND PEOPLE WERE COMFORTABLE.+

+OF COURSE, A LOT OF EXPECTATIONS WERE RAISED WHEN I BECAME PRIME MINISTER AND THE POPULARITY REALLY WAS BECAUSE OF EXPECTATIONS.+

+ON THE OTHER HAND, ALTHOUGH THEY EXPECTED THINGS TO CHANGE THEY DON'T WANT TO CHANGE. WHEN WE INSTITUTE CHANGE IMMEDIATELY THEY BECOME UNCOMFORTABLE. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE SAY LET'S LOOK EAST INSTEAD OF LOOKING WEST... THIS IS CHANGE AND THEY DON'T EVALUATE OR THINK DEEPLY ABOUT THE RESULTS FROM LOOKING EAST. THEY ONLY FELT UNCOMFORTABLE THAT HAVING BEEN LOOKING WEST ALL THE TIME THAT THEY SHOULD NOW LOOK EAST,+ HE SAID.

+WHEN THERE IS CHANGE THERE IS UNCERTAINTY AND WHEN THERE IS UNCERTAINTY THERE IS A TENDENCY TO CONDEMN THE PERSON WHO INITIATES THE CHANGE, BUT GIVEN TIME THE CHANGE HAS SHOWN RESULTS AND NOW ONCE YOU SEE RESULTS, YOU REVISE YOUR OPINION,+ HE SAID -- MORE

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DD26

U E601 AAE
MAHATHIR-POLICY 5 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

+SO THIS IS NOT A QUESTION OF MY POPULARITY OR NOT BEING POPULAR. THE FACT IS THAT ANY COMMUNITY WHEN SUBJECT TO RAPID RADICAL CHANGE WILL REACT IN THE SAME WAY... THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT. SO FOR ME IF I CAN LAST I THINK I COULD BECOME POPULAR AGAIN. BUT OF COURSE, IF I HAD BEEN THROWN OUT DURING THE TIME WHEN I WAS UNPOPULAR, OF COURSE I WILL NEVER SEE THE RESULTS AT ALL. THERE WOULD BE NO RETURN OF POPULARITY, + HE SAID.

ON WHAT HE CONSIDERED HIS HIGHEST AND LOWEST POINTS SO FAR, THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED TO A SUGGESTION THAT CHOGM WAS THE PEAK OF HIS ADMINISTRATION SO FAR WHILE THE 1987 UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY WHICH SAW HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY BEING CHALLENGED BY THE THEN TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER TENGKU RAZALEIGH HAMZAH WAS THE LOWEST POINT.

+I THINK THE SEA GAMES ALSO WE DID VERY WELL, NOT JUST WINNING THE SECOND PLACE BUT THE ORGANISATION WAS VERY GOOD.+

+CHOGM WAS A SUCCESS BECAUSE THE ORGANISATION AGAIN WAS VERY GOOD. IT DEMONSTRATES THE CAPACITY TO ORGANISE THINGS THAT WE HAVE IN THIS COUNTRY IF WE REALLY PUT OURSELVES, OUR HEART AND SOUL TO IT.+

+I THINK DURING CHOGM EVERYBODY WANTED TO SHOW THAT WE CAN DO ALL THESE THINGS. AND OF COURSE, WE WERE LUCKY BECAUSE CHOGM BECAME A HISTORY OF THE COMMONWEALTH.+ HE SAID.-- MORE
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DD27

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MAHATHIR-POLICY 6 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

HE ADDED,+IT IS THIS CHOGM WHERE WE SEE PAKISTAN RETURNING AND IT IS THIS CHOGM WE HAVE A NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL AND WHERE A VERY WELL-KNOWN SECRETARY-GENERAL LIKE SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL ENDED HIS TERM OF SERVICE. IT IS ALSO THE CHOGM THAT CONSIDERED APARTHEID, THE ENVIRONMENT.. ISSUES WHICH ARE VERY RELEVANT TO THE WORLD.+

THE PRIME MINISTER HOPED THAT MALAYSIANS WOULD ONCE AGAIN POOL THEIR RESOURCES TO MAKE THE VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR CAMPAIGN WHICH HE WOULD LAUNCH ON SUNDAY A GREAT SUCCESS.

ON THE 1987 CONTEST FOR UMNO'S TOP POST, HE SAID:

+IF YOU ASK ME TO EVALUATE, THEN I WOULD SAY THE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE LEADERSHIP IN 1987 WAS THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE. AND I HAD SAID THIS EVEN BEFORE THE CONTEST TOOK PLACE BECAUSE IT'S A DEPARTURE FROM UMNO TRADITION. I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT YOU SHOULD STICK TO TRADITION, THAT YOU DON'T CHALLENGE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.+

+OBVIOUSLY WHEN YOU CHALLENGE, IT MEANS THE PARTY MUST SPLIT. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THAT CHALLENGE, THE SUPPORTERS OF THE CANDIDATE WHO LOSES CANNOT BE RECONCILED WITH THAT OF THE CANDIDATE WHO WINS.+

+IF I HAD LOST IN THE ELECTION, I'M QUITE SURE THE PARTY WOULD FACE THE SAME TROUBLE, EXCEPT OF COURSE, I DON'T THINK THEY WOULD GO THE COURT, BUT THERE WOULD BE NO UNITY IN THE PARTY.+

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ALSO ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE RECENT PREDICTION OVER HIS FUTURE BY SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW WHO THOUGHT THAT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WOULD REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR MANY MORE YEARS.

HE SAID: +I'LL BE HERE AS LONG FOR AS THE PEOPLE WANT ME. AND OF COURSE IT IS SUBJECT TO MY OWN ABILITY TO DELIVER THE GOODS. THE MOMENT I FEEL THAT I AM NO LONGER WANTED, I AM WILLING TO STEP DOWN. I DON'T WANT TO STAY A MOMENT LONGER THAN MY (ABILITY TO DELIVER THE GOODS).+ -- BERNAMA

1114MST 28 12 89