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MAHATHIR-CORRUPTION
(EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AFTER 6 P.M. TODAY, DEC 28)

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 28 (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT CORRUPTION AND WANTS THE PEOPLE TO GIVE IT THEIR FULL SUPPORT AND HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR THOSE WHO ARE CORRUPT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT REMAINED COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING A CLEAN ADMINISTRATION, THE PEOPLE MUST NOT BE AMBIVALENT ABOUT CORRUPTION.

IN A YEAR-END INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR EDITORS OF THE LOCAL MEDIA, THE PRIME MINISTER QUASHED TALK THAT HE WAS GETTING +SOFT+ ON GRAFT.

+BUT PEOPLE ARE QUITE AMBIVALENT ABOUT THIS. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY SAY WE SHOULD FIGHT CORRUPTION BUT IF IT HAPPENS TO INVOLVE THEM OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO THEM OR THEIR OWN PARTICULAR GROUP, THEN SUDDENLY THEY FEEL THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE VERY HARSH,+ HE SAID.

+THEY WOULD LIKE TO SAY ... TAKE ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION PROVIDED IT (INVOLVES) SOMEBODY ELSE. BUT THAT SOMEBODY ELSE IS ALSO THINKING THAT IT SHOULD BE SOMEBODY ELSE.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO ACCUSED OF APPLYING +POLITICAL PRESSURE+ WHEN IT TOOK ACTION AGAINST CERTAIN PEOPLE FOR CORRUPTION. -- MORE

MAHATHIR-CORRUPTION 2 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

+WE KNOW QUITE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE MORE MONEY THAN THEY CAN ACCOUNT FOR,+ HE SAID.

+BUT THEY ARE ALREADY SAYING THAT IF WE TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM, IT MUST BE BECAUSE IT IS POLITICAL PRESSURE.+

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD HAD ACTION TAKEN AGAINST ITS OWN PEOPLE TOO.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID ONE OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS IN COMBATING CORRUPTION WAS TO OBTAIN PROOF WHICH WOULD STAND UP IN COURT.

IN CASES INVOLVING CIVIL SERVANTS, THE GOVERNMENT SOMETIMES FOUND IT EASIER TO GET THEM TO RESIGN THAN TO BRING THEM TO COURT.

WHILE THIS ACTION MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH TO PAY FOR THEIR CRIME, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO GOT AWAY WITH MILLIONS, IT WAS BETTER THAN TO TAKE THEM TO COURT WHERE THEY WOULD BE ACQUITTED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE.

+YOU'LL THEN HAVE TO RE-EMPLOY THEM. SO WHAT IS THERE? I KNOW THEY ARE GETTING AWAY WITH MILLIONS BUT THAT IS THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WE HAVE HERE,+ HE SAID.

+WE CAN'T JUST LINE THEM UP AGAINST THE WALL AND SHOOT THEM BECAUSE SOMEBODY SAID THEY ARE CORRUPT.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE HAD NO CONTROL OVER THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY (ACA) BUT AT TIMES WISHED THAT IT AVOIDED MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

-- BERNAMA

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