

U E617 AAE
MAHATHIR-ATTITUDE
BY ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN
(EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AFTER 6 P.M. TODAY, DEC 28)

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC. 28 (BERNAMA) -- IS IT TRUE THAT PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD IS A +CHANGED PERSON+ AFTER UNDERGOING A CORONARY BY-PASS OPERATION IN JANUARY THIS YEAR?

THIS IS ACTUALLY WHAT SOME OF HIS CLOSE FRIENDS HAVE BEEN SAYING AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC APPEAR TO THINK SO.

A QUESTION TO THIS EFFECT WAS POSED TO HIM DURING A YEAR-END INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR EDITORS AT HIS OFFICE HERE TODAY.

+PEOPLE SAY THAT SINCE AFTER YOUR CORONARY BY-PASS OPERATION, YOU ARE A LOT FRIENDLIER PERSON. IS IT THE CASE THAT PREVIOUSLY YOU WERE NOT FRIENDLY AND NOW YOU ARE FRIENDLY?+ GOES THE QUESTION.

THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED AMIDST LAUGHTER :+WELL, I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT I WAS VERY UNFRIENDLY PERSON. EVEN BEFORE THE CORONARY OPERATION, I WAS TRYING TO CORRECT THIS IMPRESSION WHICH I THINK WAS UNJUSTIFIED. I AM NORMALLY A VERY FRIENDLY PERSON. BUT I DON'T HAVE A VERY FRIENDLY FACE. I DON'T SMILE THAT OFTEN.+ -- MORE

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+PEOPLE TELL ME THAT I DON'T SMILE, AND SO NOW I HAVE TO SMILE MORE OFTEN. I HAVE TO TRY AND GET RID OF MY PREOCCUPATION WITH SERIOUS MATTERS. I WILL HAVE TO RESERVE MY OWN TIME FOR THAT KIND OF THING.+

+BUT CERTAINLY THE CORONARY OPERATION HAS GOT A VERY STRONG PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON ME AS IT HAS ON ANYBODY. IF YOU CONSIDER THAT DURING THE OPERATION, YOUR HEART ACTUALLY STOPS. THAT MEANS, TECHNICALLY YOU HAVE DIED BEFORE YOU RECOVER.+

+THAT IS AN EXPERIENCE WHICH AFFECTS EVERYBODY. FROM WHAT I GATHER, THE DOCTORS TELL ME, ANYBODY WHO HAS GONE THROUGH THE OPERATION HAS GONE THROUGH A VERY TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND IT SHOCKS HIM. USUALLY HE IS A CHANGED PERSON. MAYBE I'M CHANGED BECAUSE OF THAT. - BERNAMA

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