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

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 28 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR ANYONE TO BE POOR IN THIS COUNTRY, UNLESS HE IS COMPLETELY DISABLED AND CANNOT WORK.

HE SAID THAT INDONESIAN, FILIPINO AND THAI WORKERS COME TO MALAYSIA BECAUSE THERE IS MONEY TO BE MADE.

+THERE IS MONEY TO BE MADE (BY THESE FOREIGN WORKERS) BECAUSE WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN MAKING THAT KIND OF MONEY,+ HE SAID IN A YEAR-END INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR EDITORS OF THE LOCAL MEDIA.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ASKED WHY THE POVERTY LEVEL IN THE OIL-RICH STATES LIKE TERENGGANU, SABAH AND SARAWAK HAD ACTUALLY GONE UP AS REFLECTED IN THE FIGURES GIVEN UNDER THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE FIFTH MALAYSIA PLAN.

+I THINK ITS ATTITUDINAL -- THE UNWILLINGNESS TO WORK,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT FOR EXAMPLE, FEDERAL LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (FELDA) SCHEMES IN SABAH AND SARAWAK WOULD NOT ATTRACT ANY LOCAL WORKERS AT ALL TO BE INVOLVED IN CLEARING THE LAND AND PUTTING UP THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE SETTLERS TO COME IN.

INSTEAD, THE WORK WAS DONE BY IMMIGRANT FILIPINOS AND INDONESIANS. -- MORE

MAHATHIR-POVERTY 2 KUALA LUMPUR (EMBARGO)

+NOW IF THE SABAHANS WERE TO GO TO THE SCHEMES AND WORK, THERE WOULD BE NO FILIPINOS OR INDONESIANS AND THE SABAHANS WOULD HAVE THE MONEY. BUT THEY ARE NOT WILLING,+ DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

IN THE CASE OF TERENGGANU AND ALSO KELANTAN, HE SAID IT WAS PARTLY BECAUSE OF MIGRATION.

THE RICH KELANTANESE AND TERENGGANU PEOPLE WERE EITHER IN KUALA LUMPUR OR SINGAPORE OR ELSEWHERE.

+MOST OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE EARNING A LOT OF MONEY IN CHOW KIT SELLING GRILLED FISH (IKAN BAKAR) ARE FROM KELANTAN,+ HE SAID.

+THOSE WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ENTERPRISING ENOUGH AND THEREFORE THEY ARE POOR.+ -- BERNAMA

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