

817 - 4 DEC 1977

Dr. Mahathir has written and talked much about Malay problems and dilemmas. The time has now come when he can do, directly, something about them. His appointment as Chairman of Fima by the Prime Minister is both imaginative and well-considered. Dr. Mahathir is getting a chance to prove what he can do.

The man himself is of course no newcomer to public affairs. At the war's end he was secretary of the Kedah Malay Union. To many readers of the Straits Times in the late forties and fifties, he was C.H.E. Det. In this guise, he wrote with compassion about the plight of padi planters, malnutrition among fishermen, Malay poverty and rural backwardness. While the solutions he proposed to a whole myriad of problems were often queried, his sincerity was not questioned, even by his adversaries.

Dr. Mahathir joins Fima at a time when its future character is being moulded. He brings to his job not only political knowledge but experience in the world of business. It is a difficult job. But Dr. Mahathir is going into it in the right spirit, in humility and with an open mind. "I have been quite critical," he says. "Now is the time for people to criticise me."