

Mahathir: Making it up to the neglected ones...

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat — Education opportunities are now being offered to those who had in the past been neglected, Education Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed said yesterday.

"The unfortunate events of May 13 have exposed the people's dissatisfaction over many things including the education system," he said.

He said as a result of those events several changes had to be made which were agreed to by the other political parties.

"Changes were made in the education system to give ample opportunity to bumiputras to enter institutions of higher learning," Dr. Mahathir said.

He was speaking at a forum on the Malaysian education system and its role in building a progressive society, at the Mara Institute of Technology at Shah Alam.

More than 1,000 students attended the forum. Other speakers

were Prof. Syed Naguib Al-Atasi of the University Kebangsaan and Enck Hussain Abdul Rahman, a former vice-president of the MIF students' union.

"The bumiputras, especially those in the rural areas, have always been left behind in the field of education," Dr. Mahathir said.

He said the British rulers here only concentrated schools in big towns.

The country's education system was aimed at eradicating all these short-comings and making sure that all, parti-

cularly the neglected ones, got a sound education.

Many colleges and institutions, such as the Ungku Omar Polytechnic, the Federal Institute of Technology and the Tunku Abdul Rahman College had only a small proportion of bumiputra students.

The present education system has changed all this and secured more places for bumiputras.

He urged students to co-operate with the Government and play a more active and useful role.

Prof. Syed Naguib said the country's education system was still reminiscent of the colonial era.

He said historians had always given prominence to the Portuguese, Spanish, English and other Western explorers but seldom mentioned the important role Islam played in our history.

"Textbooks still contain a lot of reference to the Western achievements, but very little to others," Prof. Syed Naguib said.