

The corrupt, inept few — by Mahathir [©]

N.S.T. 30 MAR 1977

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed criticised "a small core" of civil servants today for their incompetence, corruption and general indifference to their work and the needs of the people.

"They have brought ill-repute to the public sector," he said at the opening of the first national conference of the Malaysian Institute of Personnel Management at the KL Hilton.

"They constitute a small minority but their actions and the consequent implications are potentially disruptive and extend well beyond their limited numbers.

"The Government will not tolerate this situation and will seek to rectify it through due process of the law."

Corrupt, incompetent and indifferent officials, he said, could undermine both the Government and other personnel and, if left unchecked, the public sector would deteriorate to the point of irreversibility as had happened elsewhere.

He stressed that the Government was determined to prevent and remove any manifestation of this cancer from the public service.

Dr. Mahathir felt that it was time to develop a code of ethics for the public service which

could eventually replace the present General Orders.

Such a service ethic, he said, was a more powerful form of behaviour development.

He disclosed that the Government had undertaken a series of measures to increase the efficiency and capacity of the implementation system under the Third Malaysia Plan.

An action plan

"Efforts are now under way to completely reorganise the manpower planning system of the Government to ensure that shortfalls or under-achievement of the Plan is kept below 10 per cent," he said.

"We are presently exploring several alternatives to develop an action plan."

One would be to consolidate the Development and Operating Budgets of each agency in order to develop realistic ratios and equations between manpower requirements and the scope of the development function to be executed.

Another would be the development of a proper system of evaluation based on verifiable data and actual physical checks by supervisory staff and authorities.

These two processes, he said, would largely replace or balance present subjective reporting at briefing sessions in unquantifiable terms.

Dr. Mahathir added that the Government was also working towards a forward planning capability to ensure that the manpower and skills required for a five-year development plan was projected and produced in the preceding plan.

This would be based on a projection of both the current account and the development budget over a 10-year period and marginal changes in the project goals of the Government.

"We are currently working on a system to determine manpower requirement for the Fourth Malaysia Plan to ensure that implementation and achievement of set targets will not be hampered," he said.

Dr. Mahathir said the present procedural system had caused inefficient utilisation of personnel and needed improvement.

He said Malaysia's annual rate of 12 per cent in public consumption as compared to a GDP of 8.5 per cent per annum as among the highest in the world. "This trend is economically unhealthy. An unpalatable solution is to increase personal taxes."

The Government, he added, was reluctant to resort to this type of action. The only solution was to increase the productivity in the public sector through changes in the procedural system and the assignment of new recruits into development related functions rather than to routine work.