

# Dr M: It's not our policy to make all rich

N.S.T. BY ABRAHAM ADNAN

BANGI, Sun. — Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today it was not the aim of the New Economic Policy to make everyone rich.

It was a general policy, he said, to reduce the imbalances between various races, and to eradicate "absolute" poverty.

"On the average, a large number of people would have benefitted from its implementation," he added.

Opening the Bumiputra Economic Convention at Universiti Kebangsaan here, he warned against the forum being used to mount baseless attacks on Government policies.

He said the Malays should be thankful for the many benefits they had enjoyed under the New Economic Policy.

Datuk Seri Mahathir said it had often been found "convenient" and "popular" to pin the blame on those in authority for any shortcoming.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir argued that the critics of the Government seemed to oppose every kind of effort to help the bumiputras.

"If there are no bumiputra millionaires, then there would be complaints that only non-bumiputras enjoy the wealth of the country.

"On the other hand, if there were only 100 bumiputra millionaires, then this figure is cited as proof that only a few bumiputras get rich as a result of the New Economic Policy," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the wealthy had their responsi-

"But we must not deny the effects and role of material wealth to the extent that we reject it completely," he added. It is able to provide a comfortable life, as well as to strengthen our faith and adherence to Islam itself."

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said: "Many of those born into Islam are no longer Muslims because they have fallen into poverty."

He added that it was stated in the Quran that to be poor is to approach faithlessness.

The four-day programme of seminars and workshops is organised by the university's Faculty of Economics and Management. Speakers, including a number of prominent economists, are expected to review various aspects of the implementation of the New Economic Policy.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said facts and figures were often distorted in order to present a pessimistic picture of the economic plight of the Malays.

Slogans, such as "the poor gets poorer and the rich gets richer," were often used to attract support and cheers for these armchair critics, he added.

Another popular argument, he said, was to say that only a handful of bumiputras benefitted from the New Economic Policy.

"The truth has no place to people who have other motives besides the aims and goals of the discussions being held," he said.

bilities to society. They were subject to higher taxes, either directly in the form of income taxes, or indirectly through the luxury goods they buy.

Datuk Seri Mahathir also warned against "overstatement and exaggeration."

"The bumiputra economic problem is a serious one and is not easy to overcome," he said. The solutions, he added, must be based on facts and correct information.

## Materialistic

"The plans must be practical enough for we ourselves to implement, and should not be designed only for others to carry out," he said.

Reminding the assembly not to be influenced by Marxist and socialist doctrines, Datuk Seri Mahathir said material wealth was not the only measure of happiness and comfort in life.

"Man does not live merely to compete for riches; spiritual values can give even greater happiness and peace of mind," he said.