

# Helping the investors

# Team to cut red tape

By G. UMAKANTHAN

**PENANG, Sun.** The Cabinet Committee on investment, headed by Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is now looking over all agencies involved with investments to co-ordinate them and reduce red tape to the bare essentials.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry said today it was the committee's responsibility to have a second or third look at policies which have given rise to complaints and consequently tend, rightly or wrongly, to cloud the investment climate.

He said the committee would pay special attention to the implementation of existing laws and policies (on invest-

ment) before it could consider new ones because it was at this stage that misunderstandings and uncertainties were created.

He was speaking at the 75th anniversary celebration of the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce. About 500 guests, including representatives from the Chinese Chambers of Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines attended the celebration at Dewan Sri Pinang here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said although it would not be appropriate for him to be very specific at the moment, he hoped many doubts and uncertainties would be cleared when the correct interpreta-

tion of laws and policies was spelled out.

He also announced that the Government was now taking steps to form a one-stop investment centre in the Federal Industrial Development Authority (Fida).

The centre would serve as the sole agency where potential and existing investors could seek clarification on problems related to industrial policies and come for help on matters like applications for approvals, work permits, exemption from Customs duties and the availability of infrastructure facilities.

Personnel from relevant government departments would man the centre to inform and advise investors.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said these officers would also expedite implementation of decisions taken at meetings and, if possible, solve problems on the spot.

He said the details and mode of operation of the centre were being worked out. The public would be informed as soon as they were finalised.

On the Industrial Co-ordination Act (ICA), he said it was not the Government's intention to use the Act to either hinder, obstruct or restrict private investment growth.

## Applications

He said the ICA was not a deterrent to investment. If it was there would not be a single existing investor venturing into expansion projects or manufacturing new production lines.

The ICA was enforced in 1976 and since then, out of 394 applications received, 183 were from existing manufacturers seeking approval to expand. Last year 150 or 35 per cent of the 429 applications received were for expansion programmes.

The Government, he added, was certainly not going to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.

He also appealed to all existing manufacturers who had not submitted their applications for ICA licences to do so immediately.

## Forefront

On the Malaysian Chinese community, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said they were among those in the forefront of moving Malaysia into an era of industrialisation.

He said the economic role played by them had increased tremendously with the rapid growth of Malaysia's commercial section.

At the end of 1976, the equity ownership by Malaysian Chinese was \$648 million in approved companies which had begun production. This only referred to the larger companies, and if their total involvement in the manufacturing sector was considered, the figure would "increase in geometric proportions."