

# Big job ahead for all sectors — Mahathir

From ABDULRAHMAN ADNAN

NEW DELHI, Mon. — The Fourth Malaysia Plan due to be launched at the end of the year would call for a massive undertaking by both public and private sectors to boost the manufacturing industry, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Industrially, the Plan's main thrust will be to reduce Malaysia's dependence on imports not only of consumer products but also tools, machinery and semi-processed items such as steel and petro-chemicals.

The Deputy Prime Minister was interviewed by Malaysian newsmen accompanying him on his official visit to India. He is also attending the opening today of the Third General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "We can no longer delay taking firm steps towards industrialisation. It will get more difficult day by day. If we don't start now, we will never industrialise."

## ● Waldheim's call to rich nations: 2

Although at various points during the interview he gave the impression of merely thinking aloud, it is believed he has already decided on the main industrial strategy to be pursued for the coming decade.

As Minister of Trade and Industry, he advised a cautious approach.

"But we must decide quickly our priorities. We must ask ourselves now whether or not we really want to industrialise, and then take the necessary steps."

Describing his present trip as "worthwhile" Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he saw that India had much to offer Malaysia by way of experience in small-scale industries.

These industries seek to utilise the country's

abundant labour supply. Within an industrial framework geared specifically to the needs of its vast domestic market, India produces everything from cars to razor blades and steel bars — all competing with foreign products.

"Obviously we cannot imitate the Indians; our domestic market is too small," said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

At the same time Malaysian consumers had become too sophisticated, having been exposed to a wide choice of imports and being able to pay for quality.

"But if we don't start somewhere we may never be able to start at all. As existing industries (dependent almost entirely on imported technology, components and machinery) get bigger to maximise the economies of scale, it will be more difficult to enter the field.

## Technology

"We must now find a way to marry the need for satisfying the tastes of our people and the need to achieve a degree of indigenous manufactures."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the process towards self-reliance in technology could be painful in the early stages as Malaysia lacked even the most basic production know-how.

"If we talk about small-scale resource-based industries now, we are not even sure if we have adequate supporting industries.

"At the moment we cannot even make a rubber doll without importing most of the materials and tools needed."

The Deputy Prime Minister is scheduled to make a statement tomorrow during the plenary session of UNIDO, where he is expected to develop on the same points in the context of international trade and co-operation.