

# Dr M makes it clear the matter on land

NST - 3 JUN 1982

By ZAINAH ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Prime Minister has told heads of State Governments and Executive Councillors that they can only apply for a piece of land each to build a house, thus implicitly telling them to stop awarding unlimited land based on political considerations.

A Mentri Besar interviewed today said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had told them that he would not mind if they applied for a piece of land to build a house, meaning also that they should stop arbitrarily giving out land as political reward.

But coupled with this

concession was the reminder that the Prime Minister wants to be informed if any Mentri Besar, Chief Minister or State Executive Councillor applied for the land.

The Mentri Besar interviewed said he doubts if any of his Exco members would want to take up the offer for the moment.

"No one wants to jeopardise his position in office. Even though the Prime Minister said it's all right, who wants to face serious questioning when his application comes to the notice of Datuk Seri?"

Also, because the

Prime Minister had not specified (and no one dared ask) whether those already owning property could still apply for this entitlement, there is fear among the politicians that their application, under Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's scrutiny, could lead to other revelations.

It is understood that for the past many years, this land-for-a-house entitlement has been enjoyed by senior Government servants. Ministers asked for the entitlement much later.

No black and white rule exists, just a tacit understanding of the en-

titlement, even if the public official already owns other property.

A Minister interviewed said they are entitled to either Federal or State land that is being developed — normally a 10,000 sq.ft. housing lot at a concession rate.

## Special price

The going special price for the prestigious Kenny Hill area is only \$5 a sq.ft. said the Minister. The market rate for such prime land is between \$20 and \$40, says a property developer.

It is understood that several former and present Cabinet members, even those who already own houses, have taken advantage of this entitlement.

But it is also known that at least one Minister returned his land to the Government when he obtained a Government loan to buy a house.

Because this entitlement is not in black and white, questions are raised whether it can lead to abuse.

Obviously, those who already own houses, no matter how many, can still qualify for this concession. Why the need?

Ostensibly, the land awarded is for the official to build a house that he wants to live in. But who is there to check if this eventually happens?

And who is there to check that the land has not been sold for a profit?

Much of the land that has been given out in this manner is in choice areas like Section 16 in Petaling Jaya and the Ampang/Pekeliling neighbourhood where embassies and diplomats' homes are located.