

Look East — Many still in the dark

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By SABRY SHARIF

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — There are still Malaysians in the country and abroad who have yet to understand the Government's Look East policy. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"These people say the policy is an opportunity for foreign contractors to make money in Malaysia."

"They also say that the policy deprives the small contractors from participating in major projects," he said when offi-

cially launching the GKM Development Sdn Bhd's training programme here this morning.

The company, with its partners, C. Itoh and Fudo J.V. of Japan, later signed an agreement with the Malaysian Highway Authority for the construction of the 23.8-km Jitra-Alor Star highway for \$195 million.

Work started on Feb. 1 and is expected to finish in February 1987. Encik Abu Bakar Lajim signed

on behalf of GKM Development Sdn Bhd and its partners and Tan Sri G.K. Rama Iyer for the MI-IA.

The Prime Minister said the policy has nothing to do with the giving of tenders to foreign corporations, especially Japanese and Koreans.

"They (Japanese and Koreans) won the contracts because they quoted the lowest prices," he said.

More than anything else, he added, the policy

had brought about a lot of benefits to the country.

Dr Mahathir cited one of the benefits as training of Malaysian workers in new skills and expertise by foreign companies who had formed joint ventures with local contractors, especially Bumiputeras.

"Without this policy, the country will not be able to acquire new skills and expertise and accelerate national development."

"Even local contractors have benefited from this policy."

Through partnerships with foreign companies, these contractors had upgraded their capabilities, to put them in position to undertake major projects in the country.

"The small contractors have also turned into big time contractors," said the Prime Minister.

"Some of them are also capable of producing their own building materials."