

70mil target in 115 years possible: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mahamad said today that it was not impossible to achieve the 70 million population target in 115 years.

The Government, he said, had examined the matter closely and discovered that the target could be achieved within that time frame. "The normal way, without re-

sorting to polygamy."

Earlier, a delegate from Malacca had indicated that the Government should allow men to practice polygamy to achieve the 70 million population target.

Replying to points raised in the debate, Dr Mahathir said the approach towards achieving the target was important but emphasised that polygamy was not neces-

sarily one of the way.

He said the 70 million target should not be made an excuse to practise polygamy.

"I have never asked the people to practise 'polygamy.'"

He reminded the delegates that the Malaysian population is made up of 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female.

In a lighter vein, he asked: "What is to happen to the other men if one

were to marry four wives? ... Give them a chance too ... Also remember that it is the women who give birth ... And the men are not always willing ..."

Dr Mahathir emphasised that the 70 million population target was a serious matter.

"If we increased the population, we did not want the people to live in poverty, be unemployed or be beggars. We realise

that we need more hospitals, schools and other facilities," he said.

The Government, he said, also did not propose the Look East Policy to fish for votes.

"It did not mean giving contracts to the Japanese or the South Koreans," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that the policy should not be made the target of criticism if Bumiputeras failed to participate in big projects.

"However, with the policy, Bumiputeras are now involved in construction work and joint-venture projects."

In the Dayabumi project, he said, 30 per cent of the workers were Malays.

Although the 30 per cent involvement was not much, it is a step towards more Bumiputera participation in the construction and building sector he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was not undermining the abilities of the Bumiputeras to go for big projects but added they must take a "step at a time. We cannot reach the pinnacle by taking only one step," he added.