

Panel to find out why NEP failed to achieve goals

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By KHALID JAAFAR

THE Government has set up a committee to study the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and find out why it has failed to achieve the targets, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The 15-member committee is chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba. Besides government officials, the committee includes five members of the Cabinet and representatives from Bumiputera businessmen.

"The committee will consider the views of all quarters including those who have criticised several aspects of the policy and its implementation," he told newsmen after opening the 37th Umno General Assembly yesterday.

Asked whether the NEP will be extended after 1990, he said the matter is not important. What is important, he stressed, is that its objective must be achieved.

"The Bumiputeras must possess 30 per cent of the country's wealth. The target is very low compared with the proportion of Bumiputeras in the country," he said. Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, stressed that the objectives of the NEP will not be achieved by 1990 if the economy does not grow.

"We have said that the distribution of wealth is dependent on growth and if there is no growth, then there is no distribution.

"If we persist on distribution when the economy is not growing, we have to resort to robbing others," he said.

He said that in implementing the policy, allowance, therefore, has to be made for the recession which was not anticipated.

Asked whether the Government will slow down distribution because of the current economic situation, Dr Mahathir replied yes, "Whether we like it or not, now that there is no growth at all."

He said it is for this reason that priority will be given on wealth creation and less emphasis on distribution. He clarified that this is only for the time being.

Asked why he disclosed at the assembly the Government's move to prop up tin prices at the London Metal exchange, he said: "There are people who want to make a scandal out of the tin purchases to support the commodity prices.

"The Government's intention is purely to save the tin market because there is manipulation and intensive speculation within the LME to push the prices of tin down."