

DR M ON POLICY'S SETBACKS

NEP shortfall.

By KHALID JAAFAR

THE New Economic Policy (NEP) has not succeeded in creating a permanent Malay middle class; it has only worked in the equity aspect, 'the nominal share aspect as **characterised** by PNB.'

Prime Minister Datuk **Seri** Dr Mahathir **Mohamad** who said this in a special interview added that the economy is still basically the same and that what has happened is the government has made it possible for this Malay middle class to survive.

In a wide ranging interview with the Malaysian Business for its January 1 issue he said: "To say that the NEP has succeeded is to **be** optimistic. You say it has succeeded in creating this middle class of Malay professionals. It has not.

"All these people depend on the Government — the Malay contractors, the Malay lawyers, the businessmen.

"Now that the Government is not having a lot of projects, all of them are suffering," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that since the Government is **cutting** back, these Bumiputeras have reverted to being "the bottom rung of the middle class . . . a lot of them are bankrupt because they borrowed money."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir who was interviewed by the magazine as its "**Man** of the Year" said what is needed is a genuine partnership between the **Malays** and the **non-Malaya**. "Then the NEP will have succeeded."

He said that giving money to **Malays**, for them to squander, is not helping them. If anyone used a Malay name to tender for a Government project that is not helping the **Malays** or anyone.

He added that **as** things went, the Bumiputeras will need continued assistance for a long time. He said the crutch will have to remain until there is an equitable distribution of wealth.

"I would not like to see the crutch taken off when Malay contractors can only get contracts from the Government. Where are they to go?" he asked.

However, the Prime Minister said he **was** not blaming the **non-Bumiputeras** but the **Bumiputeras** who take the easy way out. "They think the **NEP** means a free gift." He stressed that the **Malays** must learn how to man age and how to be thrifty.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir **answered** questions on a wide range of subjects in the interview including **Umno** politics, corrup-

tion, the ISA arrests, the judiciary and multi-ethnic policies.

Asked whether there will be a Cabinet reshuffle he replied emphatically "NO".

On **allegations** the Government **is corrupt**, the Prime Minister said: "It seems that is the lot of people in power, to get this sort of criticism. And it is more so in my **case** because we're trying out new ideas. New ideas means change and people don't like change."

He said the perception of corruption is built up by those opposed to the Government "using the papers, making indirect remarks that slant, using the courts."

"They have given the impression that the **country is corrupt**, that the administration is **corrupt**. When I ask . . . who is corrupt? . . . nobody answers."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he is very strict in the Government, much more than before, **and** that the administration is cleaner than most countries although, as in every society, there may be some black sheep.

On the various **policies** that were **enunciated** when he took over such as the Look East and the Bersih, Cepak dan Amanah, Datuk **Seri** Dr Mahathir said they

are still being followed: "**The** fact that you don't hear it publicly **does** not mean that we've dropped it."

The Prime Minister refuted allegations that the recent ISA arrests **will** stifle criticism and encourage yes-men.

"I have nothing against critics. Even after the ISA arrests privatization, for example, was **criticised**. They were not arrested. Real, sound criticism is accepted and we have taken note of it."

However people who tell a lot of lies, who slant everything they say **and** create "an atmosphere of mistrust **and** tension" deserve the ISA.

He said he did not **like using** the ISA and tried to be liberal but if the liberalism "spawns a lot of misfits who want to project themselves as champions, etc. . . . this country cannot afford it."

On privatization the Prime **Minister** said that it 'is very slow' adding that only one or two have gone on stream like Malaysia Airlines and the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation.

There has been too much resistance against the concept despite the repeated reassurance's that the future of workers would not be adversely affected, he said.