

COUNCIL TO DRAFT POLICY

PETALING JAYA, Sun. **A council to review the New Economic Policy and draft a policy to replace the NEP after 1990 is being formed.**

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the post-1990 National Economic Consultative Council would comprise an equal number of bumiputra and non-bumiputra members and would include opposition parties and pressure groups.

He said the Government would set up a secretariat to monitor their views and provide any information that the council might need for its work.

The working arrangements, such as the appointment of the chairman, could be determined by the council itself, he said at a dinner of the Association of the Administrative and Diplomatic Service here tonight.

"Those who criticise the NEP as well as those who support it will be given a chance to help draft a new national economic policy for after 1990," Dr Mahathir said.

"To prevent anyone from accusing the Government of being partial, the council will comprise 50 per cent bumiputras and 50 per cent non-bumiputras.

"Both sides shall be represented by leaders of the ruling party as well as the opposition.

"Independent pressure groups who have always shown their dis-

satisfaction with the NEP will also have a chance to sit in the council," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said the council would study the achievements and shortfalls of the NEP and draft a new policy and programme that would be the national economic policy after 1990.

"It is up to the council to stick to a majority voice or a unanimous decision on the matter," he said.

"The Government promises that it will implement the policy approved by the council as the basis of the national economic policy after 1990," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that since independence various programmes, such as the Five-Year Development Plans, had been carried out to bring the people progress.

The Prime Minister said that to

develop Malaysia in a just manner and to avoid racial strife the Government came up with the NEP.

"The Government received much criticism when the NEP was announced. Much of the criticism stemmed from a lack of understanding of the NEP targets and mostly aimed at the issue of shares in big companies and contracts," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the NEP was aimed at seeking a balance among the races at all levels.

"Opening more opportunities for education, jobs and businesses, providing to the poor various facilities, subsidies, small loans, low-cost homes and others were all done with the aim of reducing the poverty rate among all races and

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to bring about racial balance.

"If the bumiputras are given more attention, it is because there are more poor and backward bumiputras," he said.

"If there are bumiputras who became rich because of the opportunities offered through the NEP, it is because we do not want to see the rich only among the non-bumiputras.

"This will create jealousy among the various races and this is not healthy," he added.

Dr Mahathir said certain quarters had provoked jealousy and hatred among the bumipu-

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tras and they criticised the NEP as being a tool that only benefited a selected few.

"The sad thing about this is that the bumiputras who criticise the NEP are themselves beneficiaries of the NEP.

"They (the critics) were given study opportunities that later brought them highly-paid posts because of the NEP.

"But they forgot about it and together with other groups criticised the NEP as being unjust and only benefited a few bumiputras," he said.

The Prime Minister said these critics would also be given a chance to air their views in the consultative council.