

# PM: MORE RURAL FOLK NOW MOVING TO TOWNS

By Shah A. Dadameah

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — About 60 per cent of Malaysians will likely be living in towns and cities by the year 2000, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the urban population had increased from 27 per cent in 1970 to 46 per cent in 1986.

By the year 2000, only about 40 per cent of Malaysians was expected to remain in the rural areas, the Prime Minister added when opening the National Conference of Local Councillors at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He cited the case of the United States where he said 95 per cent of the people lived in the rural areas 200 years ago, and where the situation was now reversed.

"We will face a similar situation because our towns are growing and the population is increasing," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the continuing migration to towns would mean that local councils would have to cope with increasing problems of health, pollution, traffic congestion and housing, among others.

This could not be avoided and was a measure of how far the nation had progressed, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the local councils would have to be more efficient in coping with the migration and the problems that came with it.

And it would help a lot if the administration of local councils was streamlined with that of the Federal and State Governments,

he added.

"We like to see good administration from the Federal Government down to the kampung level to ensure better economic growth.

"Whether we can overcome the problems that arise depends on the wisdom, efficiency, interest and dedication of local councillors," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the immediate problems that the councils could resolve included those related to health and pollution.

He said the people contribute by being more civic-minded and hygienic.

"Let us not litter our surroundings let's keep our stalls clean and orderly be more responsible about keeping our toilets clean."

The Prime Minister said local councils had been proving their worth in providing service to the people since local council elections were abolished and councillors were appointed.

When there were council elections, the representatives were more involved in promoting party interests than the people's welfare, he said.

"They had no time for local problems. They brought up national and State issues, and sometimes international issues, just to maintain party interests.

"Their intention was to impose political right from the federal to the local level," he added.

He said this led to neglect of the people they were supposed to serve.