

Dr M chides Opposition

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has chided the Opposition for demanding more time to study the Second Outline Perspective Plan before debating it in Parliament.

The Prime Minister said the Opposition could have been part of the process of formulating the plan through the National Economic Consultative Council (NECC) if they had been sincere.

Dr Mahathir was moving a motion to table the OPP2 in the Dewan Rakyat when he made these remarks resulting in a verbal exchange with Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang, lasting about 10 minutes.

During the exchange, the mood of the House shifted from amusement to uproar

when Mr Lim (DAP-Tanjong) claimed that he wrote a letter to Dr Mahathir asking for more time also on behalf of MPs from other parties.

Dr Mahathir broke off from the prepared text of his speech just before the concluding chapters and referred to Mr Lim's letter.

"I am disappointed that they have asked for more time before debating it when they have been given time to study it.

"If they had continued to be part of the NECC, they would have known about the plan which we put forward today."

Mr Lim, who was seated directly opposite the Prime Minister interrupted him and asked if this was so,

why was the NECC report not made public.

Dr Mahathir replied that all NECC members would have a copy.

Dr Mahathir went on to explain the delay in tabling the OPP2, saying that the NECC was given a year to finalise its recommendations and report to the Government.

Due to the Opposition's withdrawal and other "disturbances" to the NECC's deliberations, the NECC report was submitted late to the Government. This caused the OPP2 to be late as well.

Mr Lim again interrupted him and described his remarks as showing "perverse illogic".

To this, a smiling Dr Mahathir said: "He has no other excuse other than to say

this. Like a parrot, he said it not because he understands it but because that's all he knows.

"I suggest that he should not be the first to stand (and speak) after I have finished. There are five days (to debate the OPP2). Maybe he can debate it on the last day."

"And speak for three minutes?" Mr Lim interrupted.

To this, Dr Mahathir replied: "In one million words, he will also not agree. He does not listen to the explanation of the proposer (of the motion). He does not hear out other people's explanations.

"He does not study (the OPP2). It will not take him long (to study it). We have given him five days. As he is a brilliant person, one hour

should do," Dr Mahathir said.

Later speaking to reporters outside the Dewan Rakyat Dr Mahathir expressed confidence the Plan would be supported by the majority of the people.

Dr Mahathir based his expectations on the fact that the Barisan MPs who represented a large majority of the population had accepted the Plan.

"After discussions within the BN, and with subsequent adjustments, it appears that the result is a policy which is unanimously accepted," he said.

He added that there was no place in the world where a policy could be drawn up and accepted by all. "It's not surprising that the Opposition parties refuse to sup-

port the new policy.

Asked whether there was still a need under the OPP2 for firms to restructure to allow Bumiputera participation, he said there was still such a need.

"However, this must be done in a meaningful manner. Previously, we forced firms to restructure and sell 30 per cent of their shares to Bumiputeras.

"But some Bumiputeras, after buying these shares, sold them off straight to non-Bumiputeras. This was meaningless as we want Bumiputeras to own shares permanently."

Or, the position of foreign firms under the OPP2, he said they would be allowed to hold 100 per cent equity if they are involved in business or industry which are export-oriented.