

# Dr M happy with MCA's *'open policy'*

17 JAN 1994

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LANGKAWI: Barisan Nasional chairman and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the coalition encourages component parties to extend their membership to Malaysians of different origins.

"As long as the parties subscribe to the principle of BN, they are free to accept other Malaysians into their parties," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the parties had the right to take in others and this had posed no problem to BN so far.

"Umno has taken Thais and Sabah bumiputras into its ranks while Gerakan has been open to all races," he said.

He was speaking to newsmen after witnessing the launching of the Thomas Cup project here.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a statement by MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik that Malaysians of Chinese origin bearing non-

Chinese names can now join MCA.

Dr Ling said on Saturday that the party had received many applications from Malaysians with Thai, Indian or Kadazan names especially from Perlis, Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan and Sabah.

He said the move was in line with the party's constitution, which allows the acceptance of Malaysians of Chinese origin as members.

The decision was endorsed by the party's central committee as it was in line with MCA's open door policy.

Dr Mahathir also said MCA had not sought the BN's approval when it decided to take in others into the party.

"However, Umno also did not seek the BN's approval when it wanted to bring in others into its ranks," he said.

He said BN welcomed the component parties efforts to take in others rather than limit their membership to one par-

ticular race.

He said MCA was free to accept anyone into the party.

Meanwhile, Gerakan welcomed MCA's decision.

Its vice-president, Datuk Alex Lee, said yesterday the MCA constitution provided for Malaysians of Chinese origin to become members of the party, but he hoped more details would be given.

Speaking to reporters after opening Syarikat Majuhin Timber Sdn Bhd here, he said the move was in line with the MCA's campaign to increase its members and would indirectly increase support for the BN.

In Butterworth, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said membership of the party had always been open to those of Indian ancestry.

This policy had helped increase the membership from 110,000 to 350,000 since 1979 and the target was 500,000 before the next general election, he said.