

# Equal treatment for all foreign companies

By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Malaysia will extend equal treatment to all foreign companies bidding for contracts in the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Although Britain had agreed to give special consideration to Malaysian companies, the Government could not extend similar treatment to British firms, he said.

"We have to give the same consideration, like everyone else," he said when asked if the Government would give special treatment to British companies

to reciprocate Britain's friendly gesture.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the statement by British Secretary of Trade and Industry Michael Heseltine, who said Malaysian companies would be given access to all the services of the Government just as they were for British firms.

Heseltine said this at a seminar on "Business with Malaysia" in London attended by captains of British industry yesterday.

Dr Mahathir earlier opened a seminar on "Inculcating Positive Values in Public and Private Sector Administration" at the In-

stitute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia.

He said the Government had to give equal treatment to everybody as it could be disastrous since Malaysian companies too had to compete for contracts abroad.

"We are not happy to see rich countries giving aid or grants so that companies from these countries get the contracts.

"As Malaysia does not like this kind of competition, the Government decided that all tenders should be given fair consideration regardless whether grants were given or not," he said.

He, however, thanked the British Government for giv-

ing special treatment to Malaysian companies but added that Malaysia could not reciprocate the good gesture just yet as its economy was not as strong and big as Britain's.

He also felt that the move by Britain was sincere in efforts to improve relations.

"We must bear in mind that Britain is not only made up of one person. There are one or two people, like Andrew Neil, whom the British also dislike," he said in reference to the former *Sunday Times* editor who published reports on alleged corruption among Malaysian leaders.

Asked whether the Gov-

ernment was satisfied with the transfer of technology by Japanese companies to their Malaysian partners since Malaysia adopted the "Look East" policy in 1982, Dr Mahathir said it could not be denied that Japan had done its part.

"Otherwise, we would not be able to produce cars, like what was seen yesterday," he said in reference to the launch of the latest Proton model — the Perdana.

However, he said, much more could be done in the transfer of technology.

He said Japan wanted to adopt a step-by-step approach but Malaysia wanted it to be done faster.