

'Indians won't be left behind'

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Govt has always ensured their interests are not neglected: Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat: The Indian community will not be left behind in the country's wave of development and modernisation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad assured today.

"The government has created a lot of opportunities for Indians and I hope the community will not be separated from other races in the country in terms of development," he said.

He said some quarters feel that the community is lagging behind all other races and this negative perception is being used by these people who just want to see an unstable Malaysia.

He said although the community is a minority, the government has always in its policies ensured that Indians are not neglected.

"We have always made sure policies like the New Economic Policy and the country's development policy takes into consideration the plight of the minority," he

said in his speech opening the MIC Annual General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Mahathir said the per capita household income of Indians has risen from RM1,290 a month in 1990 to RM2,702 in 1999.

Poverty among Indians has also shown a decrease from 7.5% in 1990 to 1.9% in 1999.

"This clearly shows that Indians have not been left behind from enjoying the fruits of the country's success through policies drawn up by the government," he added.

The Prime Minister also revealed in 1990 the share capital held by Indians totalled RM1.06 billion, while in 1998 it rose to RM4.6 billion, indicating an average increase of 20% a year.

He said Indians have invested about RM188 million in the Amanah Saham Wawasan and Amanah Saham Malaysia trust funds.

Mahathir also said the

government is grateful to the high level of tolerance shown by Indians for the sake of a peaceful nation.

"The community has shown maturity in living with other races which has

contributed to the unity of general election in Nov-races in the country," he added.

Mahathir also thanked the community for the support shown by Indians for the Barisan Nasional in the last he added.

"Without the concerted effort of MIC's leaders and its members the BN could not have achieved this victory," he added.