

Eighth Plan to focus on social development

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KUALA LUMPUR: Education, health and housing are expected to be among the major areas of focus in the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) that will be unveiled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Parliament today.

Earlier Malaysia Plans have set strong examples of the Government's commitment towards improving the quality of life.

In the Eighth Plan, there will be considerable focus on all segments of society and their requirements in terms of basic necessities, social services, intellectual advancement and material comfort.

Special attention will be placed on poverty eradication programmes, with emphasis on the bumiputra and Indian

communities.

The Plan maps out a healthy direction for the economy and identifies new growth areas over the next five years.

It takes into account the major challenges posed by globalisation and liberalisation and its plan for the future. It aspires to place Malaysians on a certain level in information technology, telecommunications, trade and finance.

The Plan has a new vision for Malaysians to excel in the manufacturing and services sectors.

In the agriculture sector, it may be a matter of time when a farmer can have the same pride as others.

In line with its constant concern over the large food import bill, the Government is expected to come up with measures to boost the agriculture sector.

Despite the economic crisis in 1997, the economy had charted decent growth over the last Plan period.

Barring any untoward events, the Eighth Plan envisions greater participation by Malaysians in the economic development of the country.

It can be said that the Plan is designed in such a way that the country may be able to withstand difficult times.

At heart, there is a continuous effort at fostering social harmony and good relationship between various ethnic groups.

It aims to ensure that these groups have the capability to rise to the challenge and contribute to nation-building.

□ For full report on the Eighth Malaysia Plan go to Star Online at <http://thestar.com.my/>