

14 JULY 2001

Mahathir-Quality

M'SIANS' INCOME, QUALITY OF LIFE HAVE IMPROVED, SAYS DR M

PUTRAJAYA, July 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysians are enjoying higher incomes and a better quality of life.

He said Malaysia's Life Quality Index had increased from 86.22 in 1980 to 112.03 last year.

He attributed the increase to better incomes and their distribution, work environment, transport and communication, education, housing and culture.

This was achieved through continuously providing social and infrastructure facilities to people in urban and rural areas, he said in his speech at the pre-Budget dialogue session at the Prime Minister's Department here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said in 1995, 54.4 per cent of the households consist of low-income group with a monthly income of less than RM1,500 and in 1999, the group was reduced to 43.8 per cent.

He said the government's objective was to create a bigger middle-income class, with a household income of between RM1,500 and RM3,500 a month.

This group had increased from 32.2 per cent in 1995 to 37 per cent in 1999, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the poverty rate had dropped significantly by 7.5 per cent in 1999 as compared to 49.3 per cent in Peninsular Malaysia alone when the New Economic Policy (NEP) was launched in 1970.

He said the government was now focusing attention to tackle hardcore poverty among 1.4 per cent of the country's population in 1999.

He also said the government had set aside a substantial allocation under the current Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) to boost the people's income.

He said 45.9 per cent of the allocation was for the economic sector, particularly for infrastructure, agriculture and industrial projects while 25.6 per cent was for education and housing programmes.

-- BERNAMA

SHO MAM TS