

MAHATHIR'S ECONOMIC POLICIES

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MAHATHIR'S ECONOMIC POLICIES: AN INTRODUCTION

The title of this book, *Mahathir's Economic Policies* may be seen by some as provocative. There may be those who disagree with such a title for reasons that must be discussed.

There are those, for example, who feel that from 1981, YAB Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad has not really formulated the economic policies implemented under his premiership, thus not warranting the title of this book. There is also the view that government economic policies under Dr Mahathir's leadership have merely been an extension of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and other economic policies, particularly industrialisation policies, before Dr Mahathir became Prime Minister. Such views often assume that the present policies were inevitable. Yet another view suggests that these economic policies have been announced and implemented in an ad-hoc fashion, lacking the coherence suggested by such a book.

Some observers also feel that the economic policies pursued under Dr Mahathir's leadership merely reflect his earlier economic philosophy, as enunciated in his famous book, *The Malay Dilemma*, and several other writings and speeches from the sixties and seventies.

It is also often observed that policies implemented since the early 1980s have consistently served to uphold and advance certain business interests, which seem to have strong influence over national leadership. This view is often linked to the development usually known as 'money politics'. This view implies that recent policies were inevitable in view of preceding political and economic developments.

There are undeniable grains of truth in all these views. Similarly, it cannot be denied that most important changes in the ruling Barisan Nasional's economic policies have been inspired by Dr Mahathir, or have at least been attributed to him, regardless of whether they actually originated from him.

On the one hand, although the NEP and other earlier economic policies are still being pursued, it cannot be denied that Mahathir's economic thinking has had a tremendous impact. For example, the 'Malaysia Incorporated' and