

# Mahathir tells Govt officers to cut costs

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ALOR STAR, Fri. — The Prime Minister today told Government officers to "cut costs" and to limit expenditure to what each State or the authority concerned could afford.

"We must learn to live within our means," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad advised them to be thrifty and to exercise care when spending public funds.

He took to task Government officers who spent Government money without considering the present financial position of the country.

Most, officers, he said, knew only how to spend Government money and not how to save money for the Government.

He singled out the Public Works Department (PWD) as one such department.

"PWD is becoming the spending arm of the Government," said the Prime Minister at a briefing on the development of Kedah with State Gov-

By KHAIRUDDIN HASAN

ernment officers at Wisma Negeri here this morning.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a two-day official visit to Kedah, said the country cannot afford to act like a rich nation when it is not.

He said the Government could borrow money to finance various projects but these loans have to be repaid.

"We need money to service our debts. So we must cut down our expenses because our financial resources are very limited.

"But most officers do not care about the Government financial constraints. When they need money for any project, they simply turn to the Government without taking into consideration how to derive returns from these allocations," he said.

He urged departments like the PWD to keep the costs of any project down at all times.

"The PWD should not think of how they can make wonderful projects

but instead think of practical ones. Everytime I asked for simple things from them, I get complicated replies.

"Things which could be completed in one month will drag along for months because the officers will argue about the allocation, the design and so forth.

"To me, we should do things according to our means and capacity," he said.

For instance, when the Government suggested a jetty for Tasek Dayang Bunting in Langkawi, the PWD recommended a \$1.2 million one.

"The Government will not derive any direct returns from this project. A simple timber jetty would be adequate.

"Similarly, in those days we have simple buildings to house Government offices and officers. But today we want elaborate buildings. It's okay if we are rich but we are not and we have to live within our means.

"If we do not have the money we should not act as if we are rich. This applies to the Government as well as to individuals," he said.