

PM lauds efficient public agencies

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad praised government agencies yesterday for having achieved a high level of efficiency in promoting investments, but cautioned against complacency in the face of challenges during the 1990s.

"The economy is expected to continue expanding during this decade. In view of this, government agencies need to be even more efficient to ensure that economic growth is not impeded by weaknesses and flaws within the administration," he told a news conference after meeting senior government officials at Genting Highlands yesterday.

The day-long meeting, attended by department directors-general and ministries' secretaries-general, was held behind closed doors.

In his keynote address, Datuk

Seri Dr Mahathir urged government departments and agencies to maintain their high quality service to assist economic development.

He also called on senior administrators to be responsive to changes and to be open to new ideas.

"We need to try out new approaches and seek new ways to implement positive and practical changes within the public sector," he said.

In the effort to increase government revenues, for example, it is not always necessary to impose higher taxes or invent new taxes on consumer products. By lowering taxes, as was done recently in the case of cameras and other electronic goods, consumers found their purchasing power improved while companies

enjoyed better business. As a result, the Government has begun collecting higher revenues in the form of corporate tax from these companies, he said.

"This is the kind of new and positive approach which we would like to see more in the government service," he added.

Meanwhile, to a question on the increasing number of illegal immigrants in Sabah, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government is taking steps to identify and deport them.

"It's not easy, but serious actions are being taken to deal with the problem," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had said last week that some 50 per cent of the population in Sabah has been found to be illegal immigrants from the Philippines and Indonesia.