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REQUESTED REPETITION

Mahathir - Stadium

MALAYSIA CANNOT AFFORD TO RETAIN KUALA LUMPUR'S MERDEKA STADIUM,

MAHATHIR

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JITRA, Kedah, May 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia cannot afford to retain Kuala Lumpur's Merdeka Stadium merely as a remembrance of the declaration of independence there.

"We want to retain the Merdeka Stadium merely to remember an event. . . but then we are not a very rich country, we cannot afford it, + he told reporters after opening the Kubang Pasu Hospital here.

He said the Merdeka Stadium now had a high value up to hundreds of millions of Malaysian Ringgit (RM) and the Federal Government's plan was to get the money from it to build a new stadium.

"The new stadium will cost a lot., from where are we to get the money?" he said when asked to comment on the recent statement by Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Annuar Musa that the Merdeka Stadium might be demolished to make way for a business area.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia not only needed a new stadium for the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games but also one that was located outside of Kuala Lumpur as the stadium in the middle of the city could give rise to various problems such as traffic congestion. -- more

Mahathir - Stadium 2 Jitra

Asked whether the government would go ahead with its programme to demolish the stadium, he said, "... If we don't go ahead there will be no place for any games. We have to do it someday. It is better now than later. "

"As for me..... if we want to do something it is better to do it early then delay it. .. costs will increase, more problems will arise and so on," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government was aware of nostalgia and the historic value of the stadium but it should also take into account other factors.

If the government demolished the Merdeka Stadium, it could put up an appropriate building there, for instance, a cenotaph at the place where independence was proclaimed.

"We can place a picture there, historic writings and such like things," he said.

"But to retain a whole stadium there merely as a remembrance, it's very expensive, " Dr Mahathir said. -- more

Mahathir - Stadium 3 (last) Jitra

The Prime Minister hit out at certain groups which made protests over government projects because they purportedly wanted to safeguard the environment or for reasons of nostalgia or for other personal reasons but in the end they would agree to the projects.

Such protests usually delayed the projects and led to increase in costs, he said.

"Assuch if they had no really important reasons, they should not obstruct the projects because they are for the good of the people and not for the good of the government, " Dr Mahathir said. -- Dernama

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