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Mahathir-Budget

GENEROUS BUDGET BUT NOT TO FISH FOR VOTES, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the 2000 Budget to be unveiled tomorrow is good for everyone, but it is not meant to fish for votes in the next general election.

The Prime Minister described the 2000 Budget as "better than the 1999 budget" which was made last year when the economy was not doing well.

"The government expects next year's economy to show a better performance, and therefore we can afford to be more generous," he said in an interview with Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) at his office in Putrajaya, near here, today.

He said the economy had done far better than the government had expected, and for next year the government expected it to do quite well.

Dr Mahathir said the government expected more revenue next year, and because of this the government felt it should expend the money in a way that was more helpful to everyone.

When asked about the opposition allegation that next year's budget was aimed at winning votes for the ruling party, Dr Mahathir said the opposition was known for making such claims.

"Even before this when we made the national budget they claimed that we wanted to hold election, but sometimes when there was a surplus budget we did not hold election," he said.

Asked on the opposition's shadow budget for next year that was announced yesterday, Dr Mahathir said it was just propaganda to fish for votes in the next general election.

"They have never drawn up budgets before...they do not know from what sources to get money and how much can be spent.

"Even if they have experience it is from former government members, and these people too do not know how to manage the economy because when we allowed them to we faced problems," he said.

Dr Mahathir is confident that the majority of the people would not be influenced by the opposition's move as they could judge for themselves the government's ability in administering the country, including during the economic downturn.

Dr Mahathir expressed regret that some ministries did not use up the allocations provided because their failure to spend could affect the country's economic growth.

"If they do not spend then this will affect the country's economic growth because government expenditure contributes to the income of people like contractors and consortiums whose business cannot improve if our money is not spent," he said.

He said every ministry was provided with allocations but most could not use up the money because of long bureaucratic processes.

The government would remind ministries to spend the allocations given them because if not it would be meaningless for the government to provide the allocations, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the country's economic recovery was apparent and real but to further boost the country's performance certain sectors should be given attention.

The required efforts included holding buy Malaysian goods campaigns, and property ownership campaigns which would be held soon, he said.

He said the government would study all the economic indices in the country and would take actions to improve the performances in areas found

below par.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated that the government did not spend beyond its capacity in developing the new federal administrative centre in Putrajaya.

The Prime Minister also said the government did not neglect the rural community and would continue to develop the rural areas.

-- BERNAMA

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