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MAHATHIR-ALLOCATIONS

MAHATHIR DIRECTS ALLOCATIONS TO BE SPENT ON TIME

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed secretaries-general and financial officers to ensure bureaucratic procedures are carried out expeditiously so that allocations to individual ministries under this year's budget are spent within the given time frame.

"Your full co-operation is needed to ensure that all development projects are completed on time," he told secretaries-general and financial officers from all ministeries at a meeting here today.

"I assure you that with the necessary results, the monetary rewards will be forthcoming," Dr Mahathir said.

The outcome of the meeting with the officers was reported in a statement released by the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) here.

Expressing concern over the delay in the implementation of projects and the spending of allocations, the prime minister said while the civil service was efficient compared with those in other developing countries, there was still room for improvement.

"We spend 80 percent of the budget to administer 20 percent of development and this is very inefficient," he said.

Dr Mahathir stressed that while the government was keen to see implementation of projects expedited, it also wanted proper procedures to be followed with all development monitored closely to ensure accountability.

At the same time, ministries should ensure that contractors hired to carry out projects are paid on time in order not to eat into their profits and also to allow them to expedite payment to the other sub-contractors, suppliers and workers, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government had allocated RM17.361 billion for development purposes this year, but based on previous experiences, only between seven and eight percent would have been spent in the first quarter of the year.

A lot of work is needed to spend the remaining 90-odd percent in the next eight months and thus the urgency for all ministries and agencies to improve efficiency, he said.

By right, the bulk of the budget should be spent in the first half of the year to ensure that all projects are implemented on time, and all money allocated spent efficiently, he added.

Meanwhile, in a report presented at the today's meeting, the treasury outlined several key weaknesses of implementation which had contributed to delays in budget spending.

The treasury also admitted that clearing and approval on their part was too time consuming and that there was a need to review certain procedures and regulations.

To this, Dr Mahathir said that delays could be a result of slow implementation of procedures and not the procedures themselves.

"Procedures are not there to be followed at one's own pace and leisure. We have people who are not paying attention to the problem at hand. If procedures are wrong, let us look at them," he said.

He also called on civil servants not to be clock watchers and leave the office at the set time, but to take the initiative of working extra hours to clear their work. -- BERNAMA

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