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PM: Govt not extravagant

THE Government has not been extravagant in developing the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

There is no strain on the Government's budget and so far not a single sen has been borrowed to build Cyberjaya and Putrajaya, he said.

"We are not extravagant at all. A person is extravagant if he spends beyond his means. A billionaire who spends RM1 billion is not being extravagant because he has the money.

"But if the person is a millionaire and spends like a billionaire, that is being extravagant. We spend what we have, not anymore than that," Dr Mahathir said at a press conference after the MSC International Advisory Panel (IAP) networking session with Cabinet ministers in Putrajaya yesterday.

"Fortunately for us, we budgeted for this at a time when the ringgit was strong at 2.50 against the US dollar. If we were to do it now, it would cost at least twice as much," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has enough money to pay for everything that it needs, and has been very conservative in its financial management.

"We do not build monuments. We build things that we can use, and we don't build it just for today or for the Prime Minister's pleasure. It is meant for the Government of this country for the future, maybe the next 100 or 200 years," he added.

If a government plans only for the short term, it will find itself forever digging up here and there to try and put in what has been missed out.

"That is why, when we build the airport (KL International Airport in Sepang), we reserved 10,000ha of land. It is built to last at least 100 years, when we expect passengers using the airport to reach 125 million," Dr Mahathir said.

When the airport in Subang was built, the planners at that time designed it for 400,000 passengers a year. By the time the airport was closed 30 years later, it was handling 17 million passengers a year.

"If you build an airport and build it just for the next five years you will be in deep trouble, because finding a site for a new airport is one of the most difficult things anywhere in the world.

"I don't know what kind of air travel there will be 100 years from now, but at least we have the space. You cannot move airports every now and then, and I hope that this will be the last time we have to move an airport," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked about the initiative for the Government to go electronic, the Prime Minister said it is a matter of time that governments have to do so.

"You cannot have the old way of doing government work anymore, because you will be left behind if you don't change the way you carry out your administration.

"What we are doing is only natural ... to get all the inputs from people who know how, so that when we adopt electronic government, we will do it the right way," he said.

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