

# PM hopes for surplus 2001 Budget

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Tues:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expects the 2001 Budget to be a good one and he is hopeful it will be a surplus budget, since the country has done very well this year.

"Actually, we have earned sufficient money. So, we hope we can achieve a surplus budget. If we can't, it will not be too bad," he said.

The economy has performed very well he said, adding: "Trade has gone up quite a lot. Movement of containers has increased and more ships are coming here to pick up or unload containers. So, the general picture is very good."

Expressing hope that the economic progress will continue, he said the government will do everything possible to maintain the momentum.

On the performance of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange with the Composite Index now hovering around the 730-point level, Mahathir said he does not know if the 10% repatriation levy on profits or what else is causing the erratic performance.

The minimal levy was only imposed on dividends and not on capital gains.

"I think (when) people come to our country to make money, they should pay us something. In other countries, including developed nations, they have taxes on capital gains, but not here," he said.

On the proposed hike in petrol prices, Mahathir said since local petrol is cheaper because it is subsidised, some people are smuggling the fuel, which costs RM12 a litre in some countries compared with RM1.10 here.