

Longer M-Plan

10 years instead
of five likely,
says Mahathir

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By **Husna Yusop**
husna@thesundaily.com

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs: The term of the Malaysia Plan, the cornerstone of the country's development, could be extended to 10 years from the present five.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government is studying the possibility of extending the term of the plan.

"We're thinking about that because each plan merges into the other plan. Even our yearly budget ... that also must merge with the next plan," he told reporters after attending a function to declare Putrajaya a Federal Territory at Dataran Perdana here.

He was asked to comment on talk that the 8th Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) will be made to cover 10 years.

Mahathir said: "For example, last year's budget ... not all the money have been spent, so it continues into this year but this year, we have to begin new projects."

The prime minister said he would monitor the performance of all ministries to ensure that the yearly allocations budgeted for them were spent within the same year.

Explaining why allocations for a particular year had to be carried forward at times, he said sometimes ministries would request

Govt to focus on agricultural sector next

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allocations for projects which were not implemented immediately.

"They are just going to acquire the land and, of course, the land acquisition would take six months while the construction would take three years. So, they don't spend the money within the same year," he said.

Mahathir said the ministries would have to plan their projects properly to implement them efficiently.

Asked what will be the next mammoth project after Putrajaya, he said the government was concentrating on the agricultural sector, especially on ways to boost food production and manufacturing.

The government was also finding ways to reduce food imports and increase food exports, he said.

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