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Mahathir-spending

GREATER SPENDING BY MINISTRIES NOW, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was now more spending by the various ministries after they were directed to submit a fortnightly report to him on their utilisation of allocations.

"Since the directive was issued, the spending has gone up as they have to submit the report," he said at a dinner in conjunction with the tabling of the National Budget 2002 in the Dewan Rakyat recently.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said the directive was among the measures taken to ensure that the ministries spent fully the money allocated to them.

The directive to use up all the allocations was well received by the ministries, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia was unique in the sense that the ministries were slow in using up allocations, unlike the situation in other developing countries where there was shortage of funds.

"Every year, only 80 per cent of the allocations is spent. This include Christmas shopping at year-end...don't know to spend all the money," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that although the government was indebted to the ministries for not spending all the money, the people on the other hand wanted the allocations to be fully utilised for their benefits.

On the National Budget 2002 which he tabled on Oct 19, he said the people should be thankful for the good things provided in the budget.

He said civil servants in particular should be grateful for the half month bonus or a minimum of RM1,000, which was higher than the increase in petrol prices that they had to pay.

Dr Mahathir said the number of civil servants earning RM2,000 and below were also higher than those earning RM2,000 and more.

"As such, the bonus provides more benefit to those with a monthly salary of less than RM2,000," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the RM1,000 bonus was enough to cover petrol prices of eight per cent.

"Count your blessings, then we will become happier people," he said.

He said people were quick to forget the good things they received because they were so concerned with the bad things.

"I feel the budget is not that bad...many (taxes) have been reduced and only a few have been increased," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who was personally involved in the preparation of the budget, said the toughest part for him was to accommodate the request by the private sector, statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations which wanted more allocations for development but taxes reduced.

He said he was a bit nervous after he presented the budget, which he was involved directly for the first time, as waited for reactions from the public.

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