

# PM: We must be willing to pay for better facilities

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CYBERJAYA, Mon. — Malaysians must be willing to pay extra for goods, services and facilities which are intended to bring comfort to their lives, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Government could not depend solely on tax collection to finance

sophisticated facilities in the country.

“We cannot expect to get something for free. We have to pay either directly or indirectly to upgrade our living standards.

“As our per capita earning power has escalated, we should be prepared to pay more for better facilities,” he said.

Citing an example, Dr Mahathir said although the Government imposed toll on expressways, the

sum was nominal and would not excessively burden the people.

“The provision of infrastructure such as highways, telecommunications and power supply is partly financed by toll paid by the people but toll collection alone is insufficient to pay for the development and maintenance of such infrastructure.

“Toll rates must be elevated multi-fold if we wish to use it to finance our infrastructure projects.

“But if the toll charges are too high they may become a burden to the people and not many people will use the facility.

“As a result, the Government chooses to bear the cost of building public facilities by giving out massive subsidies,” he said, noting that this was done through cross-subsidy provided that sufficient revenues could be generated from other sources.

Speaking at the opening of a

seminar on urban management at the Cyberview Lodge Resort, Dr Mahathir said the notion that toll and other charges for the use of certain facilities should not be collected or should be further reduced, would only result in failure to provide such facilities.

“It can also mean that the Government will be forced to reduce its allocation for other facilities or

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simply increase taxes to fund the cost of undertaking certain projects.”

Dr Mahathir also chided some quarters who “specialise in questioning why our surrounding is not up to standard” but rejected the need to shoulder the additional cost to improve the situation.

“When they are offered the job to provide an infrastructure according to the pricing they themselves recommended, they are unwilling to carry out the work.

“They are more like free-loaders who expect others to pay for their personal enjoyment. This is not possible,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said city dwellers must accept the fact that their cost of living would always be higher than those living in rural areas.

“In addition, they must be prepared to shoulder part of the cost. The more and the better the facilities in urban areas, the higher the cost of living.

“We shouldn’t forget that our income, especially as urban folks, has gone up. Part of the increase should be used to pay for the cost incurred in the provision of better services.

“City folks can help reduce the complexities and high management cost of their surroundings by co-operating with their local authorities and by practising self-discipline when using public facilities,” he added.

The Prime Minister also stressed the need to control the growth of cities to prevent them from becoming slums and being densely populated.

“The development must be carried out carefully and there must be basic facilities such as electricity and water, roads, street lights, divisions in accordance with types of activities and garbage disposal and sewerage systems.

“If a place has turned into a slum, the process of repairing and cleaning it up will incur a high cost. At the same time, the people will feel irritated and some will oppose or act violently.

“All these makes the administration of towns and cities complicat-

ed,” he said, adding that it was the responsibility of local authorities to ensure the proper development of new townships.

“Similarly, the local authorities should also ensure that old townships are properly managed and preserved.

“The interests of the people should be given due consideration. On the other hand, the people too must cooperate with their local authorities for the mutual benefit of both parties.”

Themed “Good Urban Governance”, the two-day urban management seminar is jointly organised by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia’s Institut Sultan Iskandar and Setia Haruman Sdn Bhd, which is the master developer of Cyberjaya.

It is aimed at popularising and clarifying the concept of good urban governance as well as finding ways to foster good governance by taking into account local socio-economic situations and local politics and idiosyncrasies.