

Dr M: No new taxes as revenue sufficient

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TAX COLLECTION

THE Government has not introduced any new taxes or increased existing ones as revenue derived from existing taxes is sufficient, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said the Government realised that tax collection could be enhanced by improving enforcement efficiency.

"It is sufficient. We realised that we could actually collect more tax, the surge in tax revenue in the last two years is quite phenomenal...owing to more efficient enforcement (especially by the Inland Revenue Board and the Customs Department)," he said.

Dr Mahathir, also Finance Minister, was speaking at a Press conference after presenting the 2003 National Budget at Parliament yesterday. He was responding to questions from reporters on whether the Government could garner enough income without introducing any new taxes and with many existing taxes removed or further reduced in the 2003 Budget.

On the teaching of Mathematics

and Science in English, Dr Mahathir said preparations would continue at all schools.

Asked if the decision was an indication that the subjects would be taught in English from Standard One, Dr Mahathir said; "Year one, standard four or standard six...it does not matter, we are just making all the necessary preparations and we have allocated huge sums (of money) for this purpose."

He said that the 2003 Budget placed greater emphasis on the younger generation as they would be the future leaders of the nation with a necessity to groom and lead them towards the right path.

"If in the past our focus was on tertiary education, this time we have allocated RM14 billion for primary and secondary school students while tertiary education gets RM8 billion," he said, elaborating on the Budget.

Asked if this was the last time that he would be presenting the National Budget, Dr Mahathir said: "No, God willing, I'll be presenting next year's Budget hopefully unless (I am) sick then because I'm supposed to retire only after October. As you

know this is still September and I'm presenting the budget.

"Next year, probably the Budget would be just as early, might be earlier even, because of the fasting month," Dr Mahathir said, assuring reporting of his continued presence.

On the appointment of a new Finance Minister, Dr Mahathir said the matter had not crossed his mind yet.

"You keep on reminding me and everytime you remind me, I remember. Applicants are welcome," he said in jest.

On the detention of 21 Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members in Singapore, whom the Singaporean Government had accused of trying to topple the Malaysian Government, Dr Mahathir said that he has not ascertained the truth of the matter.

"I don't know if this is true or not. I want to know the details before making any comments," he said.

Asked if the Government would send officials to Singapore to obtain more information, he said this was not necessary.

"We can just ask them...no need to send our officials," he added.