

03 JUN 2002

Mahathir-Budget

DR MAHATHIR WANTS VOLUNTARY BODIES TO HELP CHECK SOCIAL PROBLEMS

PUTRAJAYA, June 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today voluntary bodies and social organisations should assist the government's efforts in checking both social problems and crime.

He said these groups should, in tandem with the government, strive to resolve the problems faced by the community to improve quality of life and the well-being of the people.

"While we are experiencing improvements in the quality of life, we also need to address current social issues," he said at the Budget 2003 dialogue attended by representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social bodies here today.

Dr Mahathir said several social problems had made the headlines in the mass media lately and stressed that incidence of incest, drug abuse, sexual harassment and rape needed to be checked to prevent them from turning "cancerous" in the community.

"Criminal cases such as militant movements and terrorism should also be addressed to ensure security and stability of the country. I hope voluntary bodies and social organisations will use their allocations and facilities provided by the government in an efficient and effective manner," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in this respect they required to get cooperation of the private sector to organise social and community programmes effectively.

Another issue that required attention was the problem of retrenchment of workers and unemployment particularly among graduates following weak growth in the global economy.

"The major cause of this problem is the mismatch between the graduates produced by institutions of higher learning and the manpower needs of the industrial sector," he said.

To address the issue, the prime minister said several programmes and skills training were being implemented by government agencies.

He said the government had always been sensitive towards the need to improve the well-being of the people especially the lower income and the less-privileged groups.

Dr Mahathir said under the Five Year Development Programme the government had provided an increasingly bigger allocation for social development programmes.

The Budget 2002 had allocated RM35.4 billion or 35.2 per cent of the total budget for programmes related to education, health, housing as well as social welfare and services.

"To improve the standard of living of the rural community and to upgrade their facilities, the government had provided the largest allocation of RM5.34 billion towards programmes related to agriculture, land development, and village and community development," he said.

The government, he said, also emphasised on health, family development and rural education.

Such programmes, already implemented by the government, had succeeded in improving the people's quality of life, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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