

PM: Don't make empty promises

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has ticked off state governments which made election promises to the people but are unable to deliver them because they did not have sufficient funds.

"I have reminded them not to make any promises. Some think the Federal Government has a lot of money, so (they) just ask for it," said the Prime Minister after a 2004 Budget dialogue session with Chief Ministers, Mentris Besar and Government Backbenchers at the Finance Ministry yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, pointed out that the Government had limited funds and must spend its money wisely.

"If we spend too much, our debt will also increase much more and this will become a problem to the country. That is why I reminded the MBs and others who ask us to spend more that we can't afford (to do so)," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said it was impossible for the Government to approve excessive allocation requests by the states.

"We find that some states are not asking for RM10mil or RM20mil but RM1 bil.

"We can print more money but the value will drop," he said.

"You can ask but the request must be reasonable. Don't be frustrated if we reject requests that are too excessive."

The Prime Minister said the Govern

ment should not be blamed and that elected representatives should explain the situation to the people.

"I hope that the people will understand why their demands cannot be met. I also hope that the state governments and MPs will not tell the people that 'we've requested but it was turned down by the Federal Government'," he added.

When asked if the states had misused their allocations, Dr Mahathir said they did not but that some states wanted to have more money to speed

up their development.

"We may have achieved independence for 46 years (but) some areas do not have tarred roads, water or electricity supply," he said.

He also said that some quarters had suggested reducing certain taxes and collecting more from others.

"We are likely to accept those kinds of suggestions but to simply call the Government to give more incentives, reduce taxes and spend more money on infrastructure, that we cannot do," Dr Mahathir said.