

# Budget a farewell gift from PM, say disabled

STAR 14 SEP 2003

**PETALING JAYA:** Many disabled people described Budget 2004 as a "wonderful departure present" from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and "something too good to be real."

A spokesman for the disabled, Anthony Thanasayan, said they wanted to give the Prime Minister a gift for his leadership and services to the country when he retires next month but instead he "gives us this wonderful present."

"It's going to be a better world for the disabled," he said, adding that what they had proposed during a dialogue with Dr Mahathir in Putrajaya in June had been considered by him.

Malaysian Confederation of the Disabled president Mohamad Sazali Sha'ari also described the Budget as a splendid one for the disabled.

"It's something that we proposed in the dialogue and it has been looked into and considered," said Mohamad Sazali, who is hearing impaired.

His sign language was interpreted by his assistant Wan Zuraidah Abu.

YMCA Self Reliance Centre for the Deaf executive-in-charge Lucy Lim praised the Government for offering flexible hours for civil servants with

disabled children, saying this showed much understanding of their predicament.

She said the Government announced a one per cent allocation of public service posts for the disabled many years ago but many deaf people lost out because they did not have a credit in Bahasa Malaysia as they could not attend the oral examination.

"It is marked *tidak hadir* although they do not have to take the oral exam. The mother tongue for the deaf is the sign language. Bahasa Malaysia and English are only written languages for them," she said, hoping the Government would look into this.

Malaysian Association for the Blind executive director George Thomas said the one per cent allocation was good but the Government must ensure its implementation as the disabled might end up in lower job categories.

On the RM25 monthly allowance for disabled schoolchildren, Chng Cheng Hui, who has a 16-year-old autistic son, welcomed it.

"Although schooling is almost free in integrated primary schools, parents still have to pay transport costs," he said.