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Mahathir-Gratitude

DR MAHATHIR DISMISSES TALK OF A "GRATITUDE BUDGET"

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed the notion that the Budget 2004 which he presented at the Dewan Rakyat today was one to show his gratitude to the people for keeping him and the Barisan Nasional in power all these years.

"It is not my money...I can't show gratitude to the people by spending the government's money. I don't do that kind of thing," he said.

He told reporters this after delivering the budget in a marathon three-hour speech.

Budget 2004 is the last budget to be presented by Dr Mahathir, who is also the Finance Minister, as he will be retiring from all government positions end of next month after being in power for the last 22 years.

To another question on why there was a decrease in the total monies to be spent by the government next year compared with 2003, he said that this year the nation had "a lot of supplementaries so the budget increased quite a lot."

"Even in 2004 it may be necessary to have a supplementary budget but as far as possible, we want to avoid making supplementary budget because it is a very inefficient way of budgeting," he added.

On the half-month bonus for civil servants, which he also announced in the budget, he said over one million civil servants in the country would be paid the bonus in staggered payments.

-- BERNAMA

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