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Mahathir-Sanitation

GOVERNMENT TO SET UP SANITATION COMMISSION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The government will establish a Sanitation Commission to formulate economic and safety regulations to safeguard public interest and to promote the development of sewerage and solid waste management, the Prime Minister said today.

Tabling the Eighth Malaysia Plan Mid Term Review Report in the Dewan Rakyat, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said during the review period there would be focus on developing the sewerage subsector.

There would be improved services with the construction of new infrastructure as well as upgrading and rehabilitation of existing systems, he said.

Capital and refurbishment works had been undertaken to improve the quality of effluent discharged into surface water bodies, thereby improving the environment, said Dr Mahathir who retires tomorrow after 22 years as Prime Minister.

He said the capital development programme for sewerage would continue during the remaining period of the Eighth Malaysia Plan.

"The construction works for Phase 1 of the National Sewerage Project will commence while the tendering process for Phase 2 will be initiated. The projects under Phase 1 will provide an additional sewerage treatment capacity of 979,000 population equivalent (PE) when completed in 2005," he added.

To ensure sustainability of water supply, the government would undertake efforts to improve efficiency and rehabilitation of existing water supply systems and construct new source works.

The Federal Government with the agreement of the states would assume a more active role in planning, managing and coordinating water resource programmes in the country.

He said the development of water resources would be undertaken with emphasis given to Integrated Water Resources Management.

A management information system would be set up to integrate the databases of all water supply authorities, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the construction of the Pahang-Selangor Interstate Raw Water Transfer would begin before the end of the Plan period while the multipurpose Beris Dam in Kedah and the Jus Dam in Melaka would be completed in 2004 while the Chereh Dam in Pahang in 2005.

Nevertheless the Prime Minister said the government would not be able to develop all the infrastructure facilities for the wellbeing of the people from the tax it collected.

"If we wait until the government has the funds, then it will take a long time for the infrastructure be to built. Hence the private sector will have to play a role and invest," he said.

However the private sector would not invest unless they received a reasonable return.

Users must therefore be prepared to pay a reasonable fee for the services rendered.

Nevertheless the government would support to the extent it could, he added.

For the good of everyone, consumers must accept the concept of "user pays" for it would be grossly unfair if people who did not use were forced to pay through several taxes for the good of the users, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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