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MAHATHIR-HIGHWAYS

MORE FUNDS TO ACCELERATE COMPLETION OF MAJOR HIGHWAYS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The government will allocate additional funds to accelerate the completion of major highways in 2004 and 2005 under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP), said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Without stating how much would the government fork out, he said the highways include the Simpang Pulai-Gua Musang-Kuala Berang; Jalan Bentong Kuala Lipis, East Kedah Highway, Kuching-Serian; Nangoh-Kanibongan, Sepulut-Kalabakan and Sipitang-Tenom routes.

Dr Mahathir said under the 8MP's review period of 2001-2003, the government had spent RM10.79 billion for the development of roads and bridges and this increased the supply of highways to 5,160 km from 2,140 km previously.

In the remaining years of the 8MP, the government would give priority towards smooth connections between various modes of public transport in the Klang Valley, Dr Mahathir said when tabling the Mid-Term Review of the 8MP at the Dewan Rakyat today.

"Public transport of various modes will be improved with the coming on stream integrated transport terminals (in the Klang Valley) The construction of the terminals will be at Bandar Tasik Selatan and Gombak on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur," he said.

The Sentul integrated station will be constructed with the participation of the private sector while the Putrajaya Monorail Track 1 will be completed soon.

A Public Transport Board will be set up to plan, coordinate and implement public transport systems in major towns, including ferry service and other mode of river transportations.

Dr Mahathir said for the remaining years of the 8MP, the government would increase its effort to turn Port Klang into a mega hub and distribution park while making the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) and Senai as the maritime and air cargo collection and distribution centre.

At the same time, the government will increase security to make the waterways safer and reduce pollution by setting up the Malaysian Maritime Authority Agency.

"A maritime training centre will be constructed at Pulau Indah, Port Klang, to complement the Maritime Academy Malaysia," he said.

"Other measures taken will include the installation of the Automatic Identification System to monitor vessels along the Straits of Malacca."

For the remaining years of the 8MP, the government will focus on ways to raise the usage of facilities already in place, increase the capacity in specialised field and raise the level of service.

He said to make the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) as the regional hub, more efforts must be put in.

"These will include efforts to woo more international airlines to fly here and for those who are already here, we must encourage them to increase their flight frequency," said Dr Mahathir.

"Besides that, the Kuching and Kota Kinabalu International Airports and the Labuan, Alor Setar, Pulau Pangkor and Melaka airports must be upgraded.

"A new airport will be constructed in Pulau Tioman to support its duty free island resort status," he said.

On rail transportation, the Prime Minister said work on the dual railway tracking from Ipoh to Padang Besar and Seremban to Johor Baharu was

expected to begin before the end of the 8MP.

"Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd must continue to improve its freight service to enable it to become the premier multi-mode regional freight service provider with links to land, sea and air," he said.

Dr Mahathir said to ensure uninterrupted water supply, the government would take measures to enhance the efficiency of the water supply system.

"The development of water resource will be carried out by the Water Integration Management," he said.

"Work on transferring of raw water from Pahang to Selangor will start before the end of the 8MP while the construction of the multi-purpose Beris Dam in Kedah and Jus Dam in Melaka is expected to be completed by 2004.

"The Chereh Dam in Pahang will only be completed by 2005."

On the development of the sewage, Dr Mahathir said work on the first phase of the National Sewage Project would start soon while the tender for the second phase would be announced in due course.

"The project under Phase One is the capacity to treat sewage to the population equivalent of 979,000 people. It is expected to be completed by 2005," he said.

A Sanitation Commission will be formed to formulate safety and economy rules which will look after the public's interest. It will also be responsible for the disposal of solid waste. -- BERNAMA

MAD TJK