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PM pays tribute to civil servants for their dedication

PUTRAJAYA, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight paid tribute to the civil servants for their role in developing the nation, describing them as true professionals.

The Prime Minister said the civil servants' untiring efforts in implementing the various Government policies had enabled the administration of the nation to run smoothly.

"I consider myself very lucky because throughout my career in the Government I have had full co-operation, especially from the civil servants.

"They have been very kind, they have implemented decisions made by the Government and they have been instrumental in making this country successful; so we really have a very professional civil service.

"You may have your differences, you may not agree with Government policies, but far and large, all Government policies are carried out and implemented the way the Government wants them to be implemented," he said in his speech at the 2004 Budget dinner at the Ministry of Finance here.

He expressed hope that such a work culture and level of professionalism would be maintained.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, also specifically thanked the Treasury staff and representatives from the various sectors involved in the preparation of the 2004 Budget.

"My wife and I would like to thank all of you for being able to prepare a budget which drew very minimal criticism from the public," he said, adding that the budget was prepared according to the capacity of the Government to cater for the needs of the people.

"To give everything that the people want is not possible all the time; we have to look at the needs, our capacity. If we keep on borrowing just to support our spending, then we will end up as a bankrupt nation in no time," he said, adding that the 2004 Budget was not prepared with the next general election in mind.

"We draw the budget based on our needs and our financial capabilities; if we go on spending in order to win elections then we will end up bankrupt. We have seen many countries drawing up their budget without taking into account their financial strength ...We can't follow such traditions.

"Personally I'm a very stingy person, and I also practise this with the Government's money."

The dinner was also attended by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Second Finance Minister Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis, former deputy Finance Minister who is now Transport Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsuddin Osman and Finance Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Samsudin Hitam.

Both Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah also sang the song Autumn Leaves as their parting gift during the dinner.