Dr M: Vision 2020 on target if gov't cuts spending
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Malaysia will still be able to achieve Vision 2020 to become a developed nation if the government is prepared to reduce and be frugal with its spending, said former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

He said the government must quickly identify and stop unnecessary projects and allocations and give priority only to those that were important.

"I suggest (that the government) be extra careful in spending. The government should study if what they are spending on now is necessary. A lot of the allocation is not necessary," he said.

Mahathir, who is also the president of Perdana Global Peace Foundation, was speaking to reporters after launching the 'One Billior Dollar Donation Campaign To Rebuild Gaza' at Shaftsbury Asteria, Cyberjaya, today.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Najib Razak's recent announcement that the government would cut its operating expenditure by RM5.5 billion to RM217.94 billion. The number, however, does not include any additional expenditure.

Mahathir added that the government had done its planning, and with the right strategies and hard work, the country would still be able to achieve the status of a developed nation.

Mahathir, who served as prime minister for 22 years, said with less allocation due to the drop of global oil prices, it was important for the government to cut unnecessary spending.

"The projects should be identified and just cut off the allocation. We know we do not have much money, so we must find ways to spend less.

"When we are rich, we act like rich people, and when we are poor, we must act like poor people," he noted.

Charlie Hebdo's hypocritical reaction

Earlier in his keynote speech, Mahathir pointed that there seemed to be a hypocritical reaction between the response to the attacks of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in France when Western countries did nothing to stop the thousands of killing in Palestine.

"I sympathise towards the cartoonists and I fully condemn terrorism. But the Western countries seem to forget about some 200,000 people who were killed, their houses and towns were destroyed in Palestine and Gaza.

"Some were babies and children while those who were injured were mostly old. When thousands were killed, nobody in the western world mourns or cries for them," said Mahathir.

Therefore, he urged Muslim countries to remain united and fight for a common freedom, as well as come up with a proper strategy to end suffering and continue rebuilding Gaza.

"We see the change of power when some European countries have recognised Palestine as an independent state. We must utilise this by not making them angry, instead bolster friendship so they can help our cause and change their mindset," he added.

On the donation, Mahathir said the donation will be chanelled to rebuild Gaza's infrastructure which includes health, housing, agriculture, water, sewerage, electrical power, telecommunications and manufacturing sectors.

The Arab and International Commission to Rebuild Gaza together with the Malaysian Society for Engineering and Technology (MySET), a learned professional society and Humanitarian Care Malaysia Berhad (MyCare) will collaborate and share knowledge in the reconstruction of Gaza and enabling the people to have a chance to rebuild their lives.

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