

PM urges people to respond positively

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

THE Prime Minister, describing the 1991 Budget as the best one ever for the Rakyat, has called on all Malaysians to respond positively by striving harder for the continued progress of the nation in the 1990s.

"I have sat through many budgets and, to my mind, this has been the best Budget for the rakyat. It's going to make many people happy," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters after the tabling of the 1991 Budget in Parliament yesterday.

He attributed the Government's ability to give out the various concessions in the 1991 Budget to the country's strong economic growth and to a stable government.

In his seventh Budget, Finance Minister Datuk Paduka Daim Zainuddin proposed a 1-5 per cent reduction in personal income tax, higher tax reliefs for wife and children, tax reliefs for EPF contribution and insurance premium, an increase in expenditure for public sector emoluments, a \$500 million allocation to

the Pensions Fund and better incentives to encourage training of staff, among other things.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said in view of these incentives, he quite agreed that the Budget is a tribute to the workers.

"But I'd prefer not to single out any group because the country will need all the help to maintain the strong economic growth and the stable government. Without strong growth and stability, the Government would not have been able to lower the taxes and provide the incentives."

There is need for workers, however, to continue aiming for higher productivity levels as this is vital to the nation's competitiveness in the world markets.

He said as highlighted in the strategies for the 1991 Budget, the only way the Government can increase revenue without raising taxes is through higher productivity.

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"If our industries can achieve high rates of productivity, they will become more competitive in international markets. As a result, revenues will increase with more exports. Thus, without having to increase taxes the Government still has the means to finance its operations and the development expenditure."

The Prime Minister said he is happy also that the ruling coalition had not needed the help of the 1991 Budget to win the recent general election.

"It proves that the BN does not make use of budgets to win elections, despite some allegations that this was an election budget. It also proves that this Government keeps its promises — we did not make any change in the Budget even after we've won the election," he said.

Datuk Paduka Daim had reiterated when presenting the Budget that it was the same Budget he would have tabled on October 25. The tabling of the Budget had been deferred due to the general election on October 20 and 21.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he could not help, however, being sceptical of the way some people would view the Budget.

"Today, the Budget will make many people happy. But I can't help anticipating that by tomorrow some so-called analysts will start drawing their own conclusions of the Budget, which will drive some people to believe that it's not that fair a budget after all; in a week, they will say there's very little good in the Budget; and in a month, someone will say the Budget is unfair."