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Budget - right prescription but some refinements needed

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LIKE a good doctor Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister and the First Minister of Finance, prescribed proposals in the 1999 Budget to revitalise the ailing Malaysian economy.

The good news is that we could be out of the recession next year with a positive growth of one per cent as compared to a negative 4.8 per cent growth estimated for this year.

However, we cannot take this projected recovery for granted. As the Prime Minister pointed out, our recovery will depend on the effectiveness of implementing the new Budget proposals and the National Economic Recovery Plan. Our success also depends on the regional and world economic prospects, which were not so good, but are now improving.

Nevertheless, we just have to put our shoulders to the wheel and soldier on together with determination and diligence and work harder for more stable political conditions as well.

The 1999 Budget was a difficult Budget to design under the current recession. The Prime Minister's Treasury team led by the Second Finance Minister, Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, deserves full praise for a fine budget. It was pragmatic, comprehensive and deflationary.