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Budget-Reaction (Perlis)

DR MAHATHIR'S BUDGET A BOOST TO PATRIOTISM - SHAHIDAN

KANGAR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Budget for next year will make the people more patriotic and encourage them to make even bigger efforts to revive the national economy, according to Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim.

"Patriotism among the people will of course help to stimulate the economy," he said when contacted in Kuala Lumpur, today.

On the monthly Saturday holiday for public sector employees Shahidan said the move would encourage civil servants to take their families on weekend holidays and boost domestic tourism.

"No question of administrative glitches since work can be adjusted to ensure it was completed according to schedule," he said.

On the higher cigarette, alcoholic beverage and gaming taxes, Shahidan said it was the best move to curb social ills and improve the people's health.

In LANGKAWI, Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid said Dr Mahathir's budget outlined clear strategies to revive the economy.

The Prime Minister's budget would benefit people from all walks of life, Sanusi told reporters here.

Unlike in previous budgets, the Prime Minister used a language understood by all, he said.

Sanusi said the budget would boost Langkawi's tourism industry in line with Dr Mahathir's pledge that the resort island would be turned into a yacht maintenance and repair centre by giving tax exemptions for five years.

He said with the move, owners of luxury boats and yachts which frequented the island need not look further to repair their vessels.

Sanusi said tourism growth would be rapid with tax exemption on travel agents bringing in 1,200 tourists since this would make them more determined to bring visitors to Kedah especially Langkawi.

In PULAU PINANG, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said Dr Mahathir's Budget was an effective effort to stimulate growth especially in the trade, tourism and manufacturing sectors.

He said tax exemption on domestic tourism was a factor in boosting growth in this sector.

The monthly Saturday holiday for public sector employees would allow them and their family to travel to local tourism spots including Pulau Pinang, Koh said.

This would encourage domestic tourism operators in the state to improve their services and products in order to attract more visitors, he said.

He said the state government welcomed announcement on the extension of allocation for infrastructure projects since projects like the Teluk Bahang Dam and the rail link to the North Butterworth Cargo Terminal were efforts to improve the state's socio-economic status.

Koh said the Education Fund allocation announced in the budget was an effort to increase the admission of students into local institutions of higher learning.

In KOTA KINABALU, Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said Dr Mahathir had tabled an excellent budget which was aimed at promoting economic growth.

The budget would also ensure that the economy got the much needed capital injection, he told reporters at his residence after listening to

the Prime Minister's Budget speech on television.

At the same time, he said, it also showed that Malaysia practised free market principles which corrected the views of some so-called analysts saying that the country wanted to isolate itself when temporary currency control mechanism was imposed.

On the budget's effect on Sabah, he said, it would provide the incentive for multi-sector growth especially in tourism and agriculture.

By way of example, Dompok said, incentives such as tax holidays for travel agencies bringing in foreign tourists would greatly boost the industry in Sabah.

"This is good for Sabah which has about 10,000 hotel rooms," he said.

Dompok also lauded the long awaited infrastructure allocation for Sabah.

In KUANTAN, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob described Dr Mahathir's Budget as inspiring and one which encouraged the people to work harder to revive the economy.

Speaking to reporters after a meet-the-people session at Felda Bukit Goh here, he said the budget would strengthen the people's confidence in the government's ability to bring the country out of the economic crisis.

Khalil said it also meant that more people would get a chance to better their standard of living besides prodding the economic sectors which had been affected by the economic downturn.

In MELAKA, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin said the budget was pragmatic and timely at a time when the country was grappling with economic problems.

He also said Melaka, being a tourism state, would benefit from the one Saturday a month holiday for government employees, he told reporters, here.

In KOTA BAHARU, the PAS-led Kelantan government described the 1999 Budget as a fiscal plan with "full of hopes" but not convincing enough to effectively revive the economy.

Deputy Menteri Besar Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman expressed the hope that the proposals in the budget would be translated into reality.

He also doubted the one per cent growth forecast for next year saying it is difficult to achieve.

"It's hard to predict although it looks impressive on paper," he said when commenting on the budget.

On taxes, Halim said the people still could not escape from the pressures of price increases of essential items.

Meanwhile, the Kelantan Consumer Association described the budget as a relief for the people because despite the economic situation the government was trying to alleviate inflationary pressures.

Its president Yusuf Ahmad said those who loved healthy living should support the tax hike for cigarettes, alcohol and gambling activities.

Farmers' Organisation Authority chairman Adhan Kechik lauded the budget, saying the increase in padi and fertilizer subsidies showed the government was sympathetic towards problems faced by farmers.

In SHAH ALAM, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said the budget had all the "ingredients" to kick-start the economy.

"The budget is practical and timely," he told reporters, here.

It also reflected Dr Mahathir's skills to manage the economic and currency problems faced by Malaysia, he added.

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