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Abdullah-Budget

2000 BUDGET FAR-SIGHTED, SAYD ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has described the 2000 Budget as far-sighted as it continues with recovery efforts besides further expanding the economy to take the nation to greater heights.

He said it also showed that the government would take steps to assist all levels of society including those in the lower income group when it could afford to do so.

"Through this Budget, it is hoped that there is a realisation that when we can afford to do something for the good of any groups in the society in terms of their economic position, we will do it.

"When in a crisis, we cannot do it," he told reporters after the tabling of the 2000 Budget by First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin in the Dewan Rakyat, here, today.

He said that the move by the government to give bonus and to increase the salaries of civil servants was in recognition of their contributions.

"We admit that if not for the dedication of government officers and staff, we will not be able to achieve economic recovery as we have now," he said.

Abdullah said: "If we were to look at it objectively by not allowing ourselves to be influenced by the election-campaign situation, the Budget is actually forward-looking, to continue with economic recovery and to further expand the nation's economy to achieve higher growth".

He said that it was not the intention of the government to give bonus and increase the salaries of its employees to stop them from opposing the government.

"The question of giving bonus to them...it is not a question of us trying to shut the mouths of those opposing us. Not that...this is granted as a recognition for them," he said.

Abdullah said that government officers should not be seen as those opposing the government because it was a fact that only a few of them adopted such an attitude.

"As we are not used to hearing government officers opposing the government, the voices of opposition really draw our attention. The same for the education sector...not all lecturers and students are opposing us," he said.

The deputy prime minister said that efforts to revive the economy were successfully implemented as the government officers were confident of the capability and the commitment of the Barisan Nasional (BN) under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in overcoming problems faced by the country.

He said that the government's efforts to reactivate the nation's economy were also helped with the absence of strikes or pressure by Cuepacs.

"If it is said that all government officers are opposing the government, they will stage strikes, they will create chaos...we will be deeper in crisis and problem," he said.

"Cuepacs can stage strikes if they want to...but they did not resort to it. This shows that there are many who are still in support, still loyal and still able to serve well," he said.

Commenting on the government's efforts to assist those in the lower-income group, he said that through the 2000 Budget, they would, among

other things, be provided opportunities to venture into small businesses.

He said that the government also placed emphasis on low-cost housing, education and promoting the agricultural sector.

He hoped that farmers would make full benefit of all the assistance provided in the 2000 Budget.

Abdullah also expressed confidence that the nation's economy would grow as planned and achieve full recovery through the various plans drawn up by the government.

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