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Government aid to poor timely boost for consumer spending

THE RM100 to be given to the hardcore of all races for the festive season will be another boost to consumer spending that will further stimulate the economy. This good news was announced on Tuesday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the Finance Minister.

As about seven per cent of the nation's 23-million people will be affected, it will mean that tens of millions in cash will be made available to the recipients to buy things during this period. It is the first time that such a payment was made to bring some cheer to the less fortunate members of society.

It is therefore another caring gesture by the government and it is apparent that it will continue to give out money where necessary so that even the underprivileged will be able to enjoy the fruit of development.

Few will complain with this move and so long as the government can afford it, those who are categorised as poor should continue to receive the money to help them to celebrate the festive occasions.

Quite often, it is not their fault that they find themselves financially handicapped, as it is more likely that they are victims of circumstances. They are usually from poor background without having access to a proper education and hence have to depend on menial work to look after their families.

It is also a sign of a caring government to take the plight of such a group into consideration to ensure that they are left alone to look after themselves. It is pointless if the government should be rich while a sizeable group remains poor and barely able to make ends meet.

The per capita income and the nation's healthy reserves therefore mean very little to them. Most of the time, they are left out of the mainstream of development and without some attention being paid to them they would be forgotten by society.

On its part, the government has been trying its best to eradicate poverty, both rural and urban, and is setting aside more allocations each year to help this unfortunate group. Apart from giving them money to help them buy the daily necessities, assistance is also being extended to get them to be able to stand on their own feet financially.

The money is to enable them to start a small business so that they will be able to earn extra income and not to depend forever on the government. This may be a time-consuming effort but it is a very important mission to get them out of the poverty trap.

They have been deprived of many of the things that many Malaysians have taken for granted including education. While education may be free, they will still be unable to send their children to school because they do not have the money to buy the school uniform, shoes, books and other items for their children.

Therefore the RM100 "ang pow" will be a boon to them as it is a lot of money which they can use to buy things for their children. They will definitely have a better festive season and one that they are likely to remember for some time.

It is hoped that the target of this scheme will be able to receive their windfall in time for the festival so that they will be able to use the money to buy all the essential items for their children and themselves to mark such special occasions.