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Budget-Social

DUTY ON CIGARETTES RAISED TO CURB SMOKING HABIT AMONG STUDENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- The import duty on cigarettes has been further raised in the 2002 Budget as the government is concerned over the spread of the smoking habit among school children and the low level of public awareness on the hazards of smoking.

"Recognising this, I propose that the import duty on cigarettes be increased from RM180 per kg to RM216 per kg while excise duty be increased from RM40 per kg to RM48 per kg," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when tabling the Budget at the Dewan Rakyat today.

He said that as the measure might lead to an increase in smuggling activities, a more aggressive approach would be taken to ensure that such activities were curbed by increasing the administrative efficiency of the Customs Department and other enforcement authorities.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Finance Minister, said that to address other social issues, a sum of RM6.8 million had been allocated under the National Unity and Social Development Ministry to carry out programmes under the Social Action Masterplan (Pintas) to enhance cooperation and participation at all levels.

He said another RM7.7 million had been allocated to the National Social Service Programme under the Youth and Sports Ministry to combat social ills among youths, particularly secondary school leavers.

In addition, a sum of RM312.4 million has been allocated to eradicate drug and crime related problems.

"Of this, RM140.4 million is for crime prevention, mainly to combat drug smuggling and abuse, besides improving treatment for drug addicts," said Dr Mahathir.

Voluntary organisations such as Pemadam and Pengasih would be getting RM282,500, he said.

"A sum of RM172 million is provided to accelerate crime investigation through the use of modern techniques such as DNA profiling to trace criminals," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government acknowledged and appreciated the spirit of volunteerism and commitment shown by various voluntary organisations.

It is therefore allocating an operating grant of RM22.9 million and a development grant of RM6 million to 375 voluntary welfare organisations.

In addition, about RM10 million is allocated for voluntary organisations to provide haemodialysis services.

Dr Mahathir said assistance was also given to non-governmental organisations to step up activities in Aids prevention and drug abuse as well as the Hospis programme for treating serious cancer patients.

"The government will provide a matching ringgit for ringgit grant for sums raised by these organisations, up to a maximum of RM1 million," he said.

a special allocation would be provided for drug addicts affected by HIV/Aids, he added.

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