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`Opposition MPs under pressure'

OPPOSITION MPs have been criticising the 2002 Budget as they are frustrated over the Government's success in tabling a people-friendly Budget, a backbencher told the House yesterday.

Datin Paduka Seripah Noli Syed Hussin (BN-Sepang) said no matter what, the Opposition would not stop criticising the Government.

"They are under pressure owing to the lack of issues to manipulate," she said when debating the 2002 Budget, tabled in Parliament on Oct 19 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Touching on the RM203.5 million allocation for the Hardcore Poor Development Programme, Seripah Noli said emphasis should now be placed on educating children from poor families.

She felt benefits through physical aid would not last long compared with providing adequate education for the children. With proper education, they would be able to escape poverty.

The Sepang MP proposed that the children attend tuition classes with the fees borne by the Government.

In areas where tuition classes were not available, she said the services of jobless graduates should be employed with reasonable allowances.

Seripah Noli also urged the Government to reconsider plans for university admission based solely on academic results.

Pas representative for Jeli Mohd Apandi Mohamad did not have much praise for the Budget saying the Government was too optimistic with its forecast of RM73 billion in revenue for next year.

"The Government should realise that oil prices are going down. Many companies are expected to suffer losses next year, which means less tax would be collected."

Mohd Apandi criticised the relatively small allocation to the Agriculture Ministry despite the fact that food imports was expected to increase.

On the RM943 million budget for low-cost houses, he said more should be provided for as thousands of people were still without a home.

He claimed that in Kelantan and Terengganu, despite land being allocated by the State Governments for low-cost units, Federal allocations for the projects were either withdrawn or cancelled.

Fung Kui Lun (DAP-Bukit Bintang) drew the attention of the House to Monday's flash floods which paralysed various parts of the city.

He said it was the second major flood to hit the city this year, hence victims should be compensated by the Government.

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