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Budget-Reaction (Abdullah)/BM

BUDGET GOOD FOR ALL, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has described the 2003 Budget as "fantastic" and beneficial to all as it does not impose any new taxes.

"Everyone benefits...no (new) taxes," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby, here.

Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, when tabling the budget today, had made several proposals which will reduce government revenue by not raising raising taxes at all.

Abdullah said the prevailing tax collection system adopted by the Royal Customs Department and the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) had proven effective after being revised several years ago.

He said taxes still had to be collected as a form of contribution to national income.

"However it does not mean that we collect taxes only when we need money and when we don't need it, we don't collect," he said.

Meanwhile, Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid said the 2003 Budget was a wholesome budget for all sectors including the rural sector.

He said the budget this time proposed a big sum of RM2.56 billion to boost rural development and encourage "indigenous industry" from the rural sector to further strengthen the national economy.

"I find it very exciting. Economic development in the rural sector will be able to reduce their dependence on export revenue that is volatile," he said.

Azmi said the rural sector was able to produce raw materials for processing into products which could yield income if carried out on a big scale.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the "people-friendly" Budget gave priority to the poor in the rural areas.

"I believe this Budget is people-friendly as every proposal made is to protect the interests and future of the people," he said.

Samy Vellu, who is also MIC president, said the Budget would also increase domestic investments and boost efficiency in the government.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, who is also Primary Industries Minister, said the incentives given for planting rubber trees for wood would encourage companies in the plantation sector to allocate 10 percent of their land for such cultivation.

He said besides giving emphasis to the low-income group, the government continued to focus attention on education, particularly at primary and secondary school levels.

Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the RM227.5 million allocated for the ministry to boost extreme and motor sports, speedboat races as well as yachting was indeed a move to regain the country's excellence in sports.

"We are proud as it is not easy to ensure that all our athletes excel at international level but the allocation has proven that these local athletes are recognised and acknowledged," he said.

The ministry is also allocated RM12.3 million for upgrading its Rakan Muda Development Programme, RM500,000 for entrepreneur development and RM50,000 for the youth fund.

-- BERNAMA

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