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Rafidah-Budget/BM

RAFIDAH: BUDGET 2003 PEOPLE-FRIENDLY, CAN ENHANCE NATIONAL RESILIENCE

BEAUFORT, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said the 2003 Budget tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Parliament yesterday is not only "people-friendly" but a budget that can strengthen the country's resilience.

Emphasis had not only been given to economic, industrial and trade sectors but also to other crucial sectors like education, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as well as social.

It also provide strength to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to assist in enhancing racial unity and instilling patriotism among the people, she said.

"The government has also provided more avenues for the people to increase their incomes so that they will have more money to spend, thus helping to further stimulate the economy, through the payment of one-month bonus or a minimum of RM1,200," she told reporters after opening Wanita Umno's Gerak Mesra programme organised by the Beaufort Umno division at Binsulok Resort, near here, today.

Rafidah, who is also Wanita Umno chief, said the Malaysian economy would have resilience only when the private sector had the capacity to increase production and export their products.

"With the comprehensive budget proposals, it is hoped the country's resilience can be enhanced to face future economic challenges," she said.

She thanked Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, for accepting almost all the proposals made by her ministry.

"The proposals were accepted because they were realistic, can reduce business costs and can boost the performance of small-and medium-scale industries as well as increase their export potential," she said.

On the proposal to turn Labuan into an International Shipping Registration Centre, Rafidah said the move was timely.

"This will make Labuan an international shipping hub. This is certainly a natural development for Labuan. I'm sure the government will provide the necessary infrastructures to transform Labuan into an international shipping hub," she added.

In KUALA LUMPUR, Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government, Datuk M. Kayveas, said the 2003 Budget would ensure an encouraging economic growth with the use of local materials.

He said opportunities provided by the government through tax exemptions must be taken advantage by all segments of the economy, especially the private sector, to stimulate domestic economic activities.

"They must venture into new fields and industries that have potential. For example, the film and animation industries are still in their infancy in Malaysia but have great potential," he told reporters after chairing the People's Progressive Party's (PPP) monthly meeting.

Kayveas is the party president.

-- BERNAMA

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