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Budget-Reaction (Youth)

2004 BUDGET PEOPLE FRIENDLY - SABAH UMNO YOUTH

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- The Sabah Umno Youth termed the 2004 Budget, announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, "friendly to the people and to the young generation".

Its chief Tawfiq Abu Bakar Titingan said the movement welcomed the approach of the comprehensive budget with its focus on youths, students and low-income earners through the road tax exemption for motorcycles below 150cc.

"This involves the elderly, the young and students who cannot afford cars and only have motorcycles to go to work and to their education institutes.

"This shows that the government is caring towards society and people in the country including groups which we sometimes forget like single mothers, youths and students," he said when asked to comment on the budget here today.

On tax hikes for cigarettes and alcohol, Tawfiq said: "I feel the government is also flexible in not prohibiting people from smoking and consuming alcohol but at the same time giving emphasis on the people's health."

In the budget, the import tax on cigarettes and tobacco-based products was increased by 20 per cent to RM259 per kg from RM216 while the excise duty was raised from RM48 to RM58 per kg.

Tawfiq said the tax hike could indirectly encourage youths to refrain from taking up the bad habit as cigarettes would cost more.

"We are also grateful that Sabah was given a good allocation of RM5.9 billion. This is a good basis for people to maintain the Barisan Nasional leadership in the state as we all know that Sabah is still left behind in terms of infrastructure," he said.

He said such benefits could only be provided to the people due to the wisdom and excellence of the country's leaders in making Malaysia's economy strong enough to withstand outside pressure.

-- BERNAMA

MK EMK