

12 SEP 2003
Budget-Reaction (States)
THUMBS UP FOR 2004 BUDGET

ALOR STAR, Sept 12 (Bernama) -- The 2004 Budget has been well received by a cross-section of the people, with Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain describing it a comprehensive one covering the interests of all groups.

He said all strata of society from farmers to students to disabled people had reason to cheer as everyone would benefit one way or another.

For Kedah, it was a particularly good budget because the agriculture sector, one of the state's mainstays, had received a big boost with the allocation of RM1 billion under the Village Micro-Credit Scheme, he said.

This scheme would give direct benefits to the 130,000 farming families in Kedah, he said when commenting on the budget unveiled by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

In SEREMBAN, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad said the budget reflected the government's credibility and ability in managing the country.

It was one of the most comprehensive budgets, which would benefit all sectors of society without prejudice, he said.

"This proves that the government has never marginalised any group and all citizens of the country would get to enjoy the fruits of the hardwork by the people and the government," he said.

He urged the people to be positive thinking and be prepared to boost their competitiveness to further strengthen the country's economy.

In Kota Bharu, Kelantan Tourism Association vice-chairman Mustapa Ibrahim said the people particularly the poor would gain from the budget.

"So too would the disabled, who have been given bigger allocations and more opportunities like holding posts in government agencies," he said.

Malaysian Bumiputera Insurance Consultants Association vice-president I Nuzihan Zakaria said the budget covered many aspects and would have a positive impact on economic growth.

The government's proposal to encourage the people to buy hospitalisation insurance policies was a boost for the insurance industry, Nuzihan said.

In Penang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said it was a pragmatic and caring budget.

The move to promote small and medium industries (SMIs) through the granting of a 20 percent tax incentive for profits below RM500,000 was pragmatic, he said.

The incentive would enable SMIs to do more on research and development to help bring Malaysian brands to the international stage, he said.

"This budget also shows that the government is taking pragmatic steps to develop the country as a centre for Information and Communications Technology (ICT)," he said.

In KANGAR, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim described it as a budget for the present and the future.

"The 2004 Budget touches on various aspects which are applicable not only for next year but also the next 100 years," he said.

Dr Mahathir had left a lasting impression with his tabling of the budget, his last before his retirement, he said.

In Johor, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the creation of offshore banks in Johor Baharu would turn it into an international financial centre.

"We have various facilities like office space, residential units and recreation centres which are world class, as being developed at Dangga Bay on the Lido beach," he told.

He believed that the budget would help bring about an economic transformation for the country.

In Ipoh, Malaysian Malay Contractors Association vice-president Datuk Muhammad Muhiyuddin Abdullah said the budget proposals were consistent with the government's efforts to improve the people's economic standing.

4B Youth secretary-general Datuk Jamaluddin Abd Rahim said the budget would boost youth development through the creation of more youth training centres.

"The big allocation for the National Service Programme can help youths to become more disciplined. I hope youth groups will make full use of the allocations.

On the abolition of road tax for motorcycles below 150cc, he said this would greatly benefit youths who were still studying.

In MELAKA, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam described it as a balanced budget capable of generating economic growth without neglecting the poor and rural people.

He hoped that the federal government would distribute allocations for research and development to the states to develop the ICT and biotechnology sectors.

The Melaka government supported efforts to turn Malaysia into an international trade centre, he said.

In Penang, Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) president S.M. Mohamed Idris said the 20 percent hike in cigarette tax was not enough and would not solve the problem of addiction to cigarettes.

The 10 percent increase in tax on liquor was also not enough as the duty would still be lower than those in most other countries, he said.

Efforts to discourage smoking and liquor consumption would not be successful as long as the government did not ban advertisements on such items, he said.

Penang Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce deputy president Haji Abdul Rafique Karim said it was a comprehensive and realistic budget to prepare for the challenges of globalisation and the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta).

Bumiputera entrepreneurs in SMIs should make use of the incentives provided by the government to help their businesses, he said.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Terengganu Umno deputy chairman said the budget was more student-friendly this time around, and it showed that the government gave stress on education.

Idris said he would not be surprised if the opposition labelled it as an election budget as such had been their attitude all these years.

Peninsular Malaysia Malay Students Federation (GPMS) secretary-general Syed Anuar Syed Mohamad said with one quarter of the budget allocated for the education sector, the standard of education was bound to improve.

Terengganu Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce president Wan Mohd Al-Bakry Wan Mohd Noor urged its members to seize the opportunities arising from the budget proposals, including the incentives announced.

In KUANTAN, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Adnan Yaakob said the budget was people-friendly as it had the well-being of the lower-income group and others in mind.

Other allocations like that for upgrading water supply in Sabah and Sarawak also showed the government's determination to improve the people's standard of living, he said.

"This budget is a gift to the people from the Prime Minister before his retirement, and it reflects his immense contributions to the country," he told reporters.

While government servants benefited from a half-month bonus, those in the private sector would gain through other incentives like the abolition of road tax for motorcycles below 150cc, he said.

Adnan said the state government welcomed the allocations for modernising the agriculture sector through the use of technology.

-- BERNAMA

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