

Polls not core consideration, says Muhyiddin
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By S Pathmawathy

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin insisted that the much anticipated general election is not the core consideration of the 2012 Budget.

"I do not think that is the primary consideration because of the situation, and the situation today requires the government to be concerned about the needs of the people, so various offers, and facilities given are for that main purpose.

"If there are parties who say this is an election Budget, then it is up to them... (but) when is the election? When?" he asked.

NONEOpposition Pakatan Rakyat criticised the Budget's aim of reducing the deficit of 5.4 percent to 4.7 percent next year, calling it an "unrealistic" aim considering the hefty allocation of RM232.8 billion.

However, Muhyiddin (right) said that despite the deficit, which has been high for the past 15 years, the country's economic growth has been sustainable.

"The issue of reducing the deficit is the government's commitment... so maybe this year the deficit could be 5.2 percent, so to reduce it to 4.7 percent, this the prime minister's guarantee," he said.

"There will be a reduction in the deficit, but not to the extent that it will stunt the growth of development," he said, adding the justification that inflation in the country is comparatively lower than in many others.

"Malaysia has not reached the stage where its rating had plunged internationally to affect foreign direct investment... This is proven through our intelligence in managing our resources, and investment is still flowing in and there is still growth," said Muhyiddin.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak delivered the Budget 2012 speech in the Dewan Rakyat today and said that the budget which has been in deficit since 1998, is expected to fall to 4.7 percent.

Najib added the government expects economic growth to remain strong - between 5 and 5.5 percent this year, after allocating RM232.8 billion for next year.

'Moving away from the traditional market'

The deputy premier expressed confidence that the world financial crisis will not affect the local climate, saying the country has "moved away from the traditional market into the new market".

Pakatan, in their shadow budget, came up with a RM220 billion limit to tackle the ballooning deficit to a manageable level of 4.4 percent.

Asked to comment on the alternative budget, Muhyiddin jibed that Pakatan had just discovered the needs of the country but the BN has been aware of it for the past 54 years.

"BN has always put people first. Although we have never said so, all this while we have been people-centric in line with the prime minister's concept of 1Malaysia and 'people first'," he said.

"The opposition, after 54 years say they want a welfare country. BN has been doing it all along. Pakatan has just realised it. Earlier in Parliament, they brought out their Orange Book and what not... But the people know," he added.

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