

Ministers sing praises and thank Najib
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BUDGET 2015 Barisan Nasional ministers are in chorus over their praises for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's Budget 2015 allocations.

In their response in Parliament, all agreed that the portions doled out in the PM's announcement will achieve its intended objectives – to spur growth and reform the economy.

The only moan came from one minister, and even then, in jest – over their salary review.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim (left) was playful in his response to their wages not being increased, pending a review, when parliamentarians and senators are assured of a pay hike.

"We accept it, although in our hearts, we are saddened. We accept it. Let the leaders in Parliament receive the increased in wages," said the Arau MP.

Najib had announced there will be a review of the salary scheme for members of the administration, which includes the PM, deputy prime minister, ministers and their deputies.

However, he announced a raise for members of both upper and lower houses.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) will increase revenue, while the list of exemptions will help the people.

"We are confident that it would not burden the public. This is the effort by the PM, who is also the finance minister, to strengthen the country.

"All the savings are needed to be distributed to the targetted group."

Muhyiddin, who is also the education minister, thanked Najib for the increase in allocation for the ministry to RM2.3 billion.

The allocation includes an increase for the maintenance of schools.

A budget for youths

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar (left) was grateful for the increase in allocation to his ministry from RM700 million to RM1 billion.

"We will receive an additional RM103 million allocation in sports and RM320 million for youth development.

"This will help increase new youth programmes to replace the National Service programme.

"New incentives will be introduced. This is a budget which emphasises the youth and sports sectors," he said.

International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamed said a total of RM1.3 billion is allocated for his ministry.

Of this, RM586.7 million is for operating expenditure and RM716 million for development.

"From 2006 to May 2014, there were 3,262 projects approved in the five economic corridors nationwide and this has contributed to a total domestic investment of RM91 billion and foreign investment of RM157 billion.

"This has created 362,891 new jobs in Malaysia," Mustapa explained.

The Jeli MP said there will be better financing initiatives for small and medium enterprises.

He added that bumiputera entrepreneurs would also benefit from the various incentives introduced.

Ensure security for Sabah

Urban Well-being, Housing and Local Government Minister Abdul Rahman Dahlan also welcomed the stimulus introduced by the government to help first-time home buyers, including a reduction in stamp duty.

Abdul Rahman (right) commended the proposed building of four "youth cities", two in the peninsula, and one each in Sabah and Sarawak.

The proposal combines work, business and entrepreneurship, as well as housing and recreational facilities for youths.

On the implementation of the GST, the Kota Belud MP said it was a tough decision but much needed to reform the economy.

Second Finance Minister Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah said the country is on track to achieve only three percent deficit.

"The projection this year is 3.5 percent and it would be three percent next year. In 2016, we target it at 2.5 per cent and by 2020, it would be zero," he said, adding that the government is still working out the targeted fuel subsidy plan which the PM will announce by the end of

the year.

Kinabatangan MP Bung Moktar Radin said the budget emphasises the security of the people, especially for Sabah, given the increase of RM600 million for the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom).

"This shows the government is concerned over the safety of Sabah and is committed to increasing security in the state," he said.

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