

PM: Budget 2016 revision still puts people first
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The revision of Budget 2016 necessitated by the volatile global economy is not all about expenditure cuts. It also concerns helping Malaysians, especially on the lower scale, cope with the rising cost of living.

While the government will be more prudent in its spending to optimise operating and development expenditure, it will still give priority to "rakyat-centric" projects and programmes.

The measures that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak announced today to restructure the budget are "to ensure sustainable economic growth and, more importantly, to safeguard the wellbeing of the rakyat".

One move, Najib said, is for EPF contributions from employees to be reduced by three percent. This is expected to increase private sector spending by RM8 billion a year.

Another measure is the giving of tax relief of up to RM3,000 to people earning RM8,000 or less a month. This will benefit some two million tax payers.

To reduce the cost of daily basic necessities, the government will liberalise the control of import quotas or Approved Permits or APs for eight agricultural products, including coffee beans and meats.

Najib, whose speech at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre was telecast live, said the MyBeras programme will be introduced where every registered hardcore household will be supplied with 20kg of rice every month until December 2016.

The budget adjustments also heeded the clamour for affordable and comfortable shelter.

With immediate effect, all units priced up to RM300,000 at new housing projects can only be sold to first-time buyers.

Other measures that the prime minister spelled out included increasing allocations to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and start-up companies.

The money will come from development financial institutions and government venture capital funds.

- Bernama