

Budget not designed for short-term political gains, says Najib

MalaysiaKini.com

Oct 20th, 2016

Najib Abdul Razak appeared to be tapering expectations on Budget 2017, stating that the government is not interested in short-term political gains.

Responding to the speculation that the financial plan, which he is scheduled to table in Parliament tomorrow, would be an election budget, the prime minister however described it as a commitment budget instead.

"Others may put short-term political gain first, but this government will not.

"We commit to ensuring that the economic fundamentals of the nation remain resilient and strong – including policy on deficit targets, spurred economic activity, and the long-term health of the financial system," he added in a media statement.

Najib also said the government is committed to being prudent and creative in optimising expenditure, to ensure delivery for the people.

"And we commit to a comprehensive, inclusive budget that will fulfil our promises to the people," he added.

Noting that during a year when advanced economies were expected to register growth of only 1.6 percent, Malaysia's economy is on course to grow between four and 4.5 percent, the prime minister said the measures introduced in the previous budget proved to be successful.

"We have a plan, and it is working.

"We will continue to ensure economic indicators – such as inflation levels, growth rates and debt levels – remain strong and resilient, reflecting the core fundamentals of the economy.

"Despite fiscal pressures, inflation has been kept at low levels, and the Malaysian people as a whole are better off today than they were a year ago. Indeed, we are now an upper middle income country," he added.

Najib also ensured the government would continue to fulfil its promises to the people in a manner that is fair and inclusive.

"We are on the right trajectory, with the economy expected to improve still further in 2017 with growth of up to five percent," he said.

At the same time, Najib said the government recognised there are challenges.

"We must put in place policies that address long-term structural changes, and will continue

our efforts to improve the Bottom 40 as well as the Middle 40.

"Our focus is on both the people economy and the public economy. The overall happiness and welfare of the people is key objective," he added.

The prime minister said he would also make further announcements on infrastructure, development, public transport and health, fiscal incentives for small and medium enterprises, and human capital and skills training.

"In line with our commitment to put the people first; we intend to accelerate economic growth, empower human capital, drive education, increase connectivity, strengthen inclusive development and improve public service delivery," he added.

In order to do so, the prime minister said a major focus of the budget would be on raising the disposable income of the people, encouraging upscaling, re-skilling and entrepreneurship training, mitigating the rising cost of living, providing more affordable houses, and funds for maintenance, substantial measures on education and allocations for the provision of quality healthcare services.

"The safety and security of all Malaysians remains my biggest priority. We will intensify our efforts and allocate more resources to our fight against extremism and crime," he added.

Earlier, in a brief video uploaded on YouTube, Najib said the budget was formulated amid a challenging and unpredictable global environment.

Yesterday, former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Budget 2017 would be meaningless, arguing that the government was cash-strapped.

Mahathir said this was because finances have not been used for good governance, development and the well-being of the people.

The money, he added, is instead being used for winning popularity for the prime minister.

Copyright © 1999-2016 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/359790>