

**LETTER | Please come out to vote wisely**

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**FLK**

LETTER | Budget 2023 will be revealed today. For sure, the budget will not only be a feel-good one but contain a lot of goodies for the poor rakyat.

The rationale for this is clear-cut.

With Umno's incessant push for a general election to be held this year – some touting that a dissolution of Parliament will occur after the budget is tabled – the prime minister and his political party will campaign on the need for voters to vote for them to continue governing so that they can deliver on the plans presented in the budget.

They are not worried if they fail to deliver on the promises presented in the budget. People already forgot Pakatan Harapan's failure in delivering their manifesto in 2018. So people will forget if the government doesn't keep to budget promises.

Alternatively, if they fail to return to power, whichever party or coalition formed to take the helm minus the PM's political party will have a big headache governing. This is as the budget, viewed from another angle, could likely be a poison pill installed for anyone who is assuming power other than those presently occupying the seat.

The budget for 2023 will be a very good one but it will be difficult to implement moving forward.

Does the country have sufficient resources on hand to meet and deliver all those goodies?

As with every budget, the country must have the income to pay for the operating expenses and various capital expenditure projects planned. If the country has to rely on debts to grow, it is a recipe for disaster.

Even the auditor-general publicly admitted that the country cannot continue to borrow to pay for its interest on the outstanding loans.

It is akin to an individual who loves and enjoys a lavish lifestyle. But the individual's existing salary is insufficient for him or her to maintain that. To supplement and sustain it, the individual resorts to loans, be it through credit

cards or personal loans.

There will come a time when the first credit card or personal loans are no longer sufficient as it is getting more expensive for the individual to sustain and maintain that lifestyle. So they apply for additional credit cards and new personal loans.

As there is still a substantial sum outstanding on the first credit card and personal loan, the individual will draw on the second or third credit card or a new personal loan to pay off a portion of the outstanding balance on the first credit card and personal loan.

If their monthly income remains static with no increments thereafter, a day will come when the individuals will not be able to pay for all the outstanding amounts. When that happens, the banks and creditors will initiate legal actions and if they still fail to make repayments, they face bankruptcy.

This is the scenario or crossroads the country is in.

Yes, the finance minister and Bank Negara have said that the country remains on the path to recovery. The minister also forewarned that the country will not be spared from the world turmoil come next year.

The big question then is, even if the recovery returns to the pre-pandemic level, is it insufficient for the country to move forward? Already, as the auditor-general said, a large chunk of the country's income goes towards debt repayment and operational expenses, leaving little for growing the country.

As with the individual described above, the country needs a new source of income or a big increment in his or her salary.

Even if the budget was to propose and allocate money for new or growing areas, where is the government going to procure and source the funding? Every new plan requires expenditure and funding.

New loans? Whether the loans are from EPF or local institutions, it is still a liability that the country has to repay.

And bear in mind, it takes time for every new or growing area to deliver a return to the country and this is on the assumption it is properly and efficiently implemented. Whatever areas the government plans and promised to embark on in Budget 2023, the country will only get to reap its benefits a few years down the road.

Between now and then, the country is still required to pay for its ever-growing

operating expenditure and the debts it has taken previously.

The recent revelation by Cuepacs that 50 percent or 800,000 of the 1.62 million civil servants are still unable to own homes is really alarming.

And for the last 60 plus years, the country was governed by the same political parties.

If the rakyat is to vote and return the same political parties to govern us in the coming election, it is highly likely that in another 60 years, homes would still remain unaffordable.

Do not believe the sales talk by politicians or others that the country is shielded and will not be affected by what is happening elsewhere in the world.

The world now is one big ecosystem. And the country is part of this single ecosystem. Just like the Covid-19 virus, if there is a failure in any country, the rest of the world will be affected. It is infectious.

The country will definitely be affected. It is only the magnitude and whether we are affected directly or indirectly.

If a majority of countries, especially in the developed world are going into a recession, we would not be spared too.

So promises about growth in the country are purely the talk of a snake oil salesperson.

If the election is to be held immediately post the delivery of the budget as widely speculated, do not be swayed by those who are selling us those dreams and hope.

Do we still want the same government to return and govern us?

The politicians are hoping that people will not come out and vote in the rain or when it is flooded. Show them no. The rakyat is not afraid and will not be cowed or bullied by the weather.

Come rain, shine or flood, we will come out and vote and in big numbers. And we will vote wisely. Collectively, the rakyat will show these greedy and selfish politicians the door.

Let's destroy their dreams. All of us owe our future generations a prosperous and healthy nation. Not a sickly country that is on life support.

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