

'Higher allocations for all sectors prove country's financial position is strong'

KUALA LUMPUR: The increased allocations for all sectors prove that the country's financial position has remained strong, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Many people think the Pakatan Harapan government is inexperienced and cannot govern the country well.

"But the increased allocations show that our financial position is still strong. The budget is a reflection of the strength of the country's administration," he said at Parliament here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is Langkawi member of parliament, said the country's credit rating was good, adding that people were coming forward to offer funds for Malaysia to borrow.

He said the projected gross domestic product growth of 4.8 per cent was proof that the government was solid, despite having to "cleanse" the administration.

"Although we are still trying to pay off debts, we have managed to improve the country's economic performance.

"The people seem happy. Almost everybody gets something."

On the 18 per cent toll discount on toll charges for the North-South Expressway, Dr Mahathir said the implementation date had yet to be determined.

He said there would be no compensation for highway concessionaire PLUS Malaysia Bhd for the reduction in toll charges.

He said the institutional reforms implemented by the government were a launch pad towards achieving a more sustainable and equitable long-term economic growth for the country, Bernama reported.

He said the government had worked hard since securing the people's mandate in the general election last year by implementing institutional reforms to combat corruption, protect liberties, enhance governance and restore the health of public finances.

These reforms also aimed to regain the people's trust in public institutions and restore Malaysia's reputation in the eyes of the world, he said in the foreword of the Economic Outlook 2020 released by the Finance Ministry yesterday.

Dr Mahathir stressed that if Malaysia became a stable and developed economy, the dividend

from the growth must be felt by all segments of society.

"Our reforms have borne fruit and made our economy more resilient in the face of external pressures, particularly arising from the persistent trade war between China and the United States."

Despite the widespread global economic slowdown, Malaysia's gross domestic product growth accelerated to 4.9 per cent in the second quarter of this year from 4.5 per cent in the previous quarter, placing Malaysia among the few countries in the world that witnessed stronger expansion this year.

However, more needed to be done, said Dr Mahathir.

To this end, the government formulated the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, which has the overarching goal of raising the living standards of all Malaysians to a decent level by 2030.

There are three objectives in the agenda: address income and wealth inequality in society so that no one is left behind; create a more progressive and more participatory higher value economy; and, establish Malaysia as one of the leading economic pillars in Asia.

The government would also work to attract high value-added, high technology and knowledge-intensive manufacturing investments to the country.

This, Dr Mahathir said, would create new high-skilled and better-paying jobs for Malaysians, as well as complete the domestic value chain of five industries, as targeted by the Industry4WRD policy, namely the electrical and electronics, machinery and equipment, chemical and chemical products, aerospace and medical devices industries.

Meanwhile, tourism, private healthcare and professional services, as well as retail trade and food and beverage, are among sectors identified for further development under the services sector.

"These major initiatives are only some of the steps we are taking to propel Malaysia into the ranks of high economies. But these efforts will fail if we are divided.

"It is important to realise that, regardless of our backgrounds, all of us have a stake under the Malaysian sun. Only when we share the Ideals, can we fulfil our dreams," Dr Mahathir said.

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TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD