

I sense a feel-good factor among the people, says Ismail Sabri

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KUALA LUMPUR: The 2022 Budget will focus on people who are still adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He said although much of the economy had reopened, many people were facing difficulties due to the long-term effects of the Movement Control Order.

“Next week, the Finance Ministry will present (more details on the Budget),” he told senior media editors in a special interview here recently.

However, he said, the situation had improved for the people, with Covid-19 cases declining, which had allowed the reopening of many economic sectors.

“The people can breathe a little now that much of the economy has reopened. I expect by December, more will be opened. I believe the feel-good factor will return when the cases go down. RNAught also continues to decline.

“Previously, we did not know when Kuala Lumpur and Selangor would reopen. But now they are in Phase 3 of the National Recovery Plan, and this is ‘the heart centre’. In Malaysia, the economy of the Klang Valley is

the focus. I think more than 70 per cent (of businesses) are concentrated here. So now that we have opened, the factories are open, I can sense the feel-good sentiment among the people.”

Ismail Sabri said the 2022 Budget would focus on the implementation of short-term initiatives that aligned with the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) to achieve the objectives of “A Prosperous, Inclusive and Sustainable Malaysia”.

On the implementation of the 12MP, he said the government had put in place optimistic targets, which took into consideration the strategies and transformation goals of the master plan.

He said the world economy contracted 3.2 per cent last year due to the pandemic, causing the global poverty rate to rise, and

that Malaysia was not spared.

“In the 11MP period from 2016 to 2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by an average of 2.7 per cent annually, lower than what was targeted. This was due to the contraction of 5.6 per cent in 2020, although the GDP grew 4.9 per cent annually in the first four years of the 11MP.

“The lower achievement of the 11MP has led to the government having to formulate policies and strategies that are more comprehensive so that the economy is sustainable, competitive and put back on track for long-term growth.”

He said views

gathered from social media on ministers’ performance in their first 100 days on the job would be used to tally their overall achievement score.

He said there were several



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methods to obtain feedback and analyse sentiment, and cited the rakyat’s perception of ministers and professional surveys as examples of some of them.

“Overall, I will score them akin to how school report cards are done, and that is one way. We have a committee. Some of those scores will come from the people, but at what percentage we have not decided. The people’s views are one way.”

He said he was quite diligent when it came to catching up with netizens’ comments and postings on social media, and sometimes even replied to them personally.

“Recently, they (ministers) presented suggestions for KPI (key performance indicators) and I told them that there needs to be that feel-good factor for the people. We will wait for the ministers to announce them themselves.”

Ismail Sabri said the 100-day report card was not a form of punishment, but a way to ensure the ministers did their job well.

“I’ve been asked if any (minister) could face the sack, and I hope none will face action. I just want them to perform well, nothing more,” he said.

On whether he had set a 100-day achievement target for himself, he said: “Yes, of course, there is one (target) for myself. Wait for my announcement when I address the nation. Wait for Dec 10.”

He also said the 12MP was well received, but added that the implementation was more important.

Ismail Sabri was also asked on non-Malays’ perception, especially the Chinese, of his administration, and whether special efforts would be taken to secure stronger support from the community.

“I have yet to carry out a detailed study (on this)... it has only been a month, (and so) it is still early days. Sometimes, they (sentiments) are positive early on but then change over time.

“Whereas, there are some who are not receptive in the beginning but get convinced as time goes by, and that is why in five or six months, three months after the 100th day, I will probably deliver an address... there are lots more to give to the people and things could change after that. That is also why 100 days is too short a period to evaluate achievements.” **Bernama**