

'Thanks' for 'people-centric' budget, DAP lawmaker tells Najib
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While his colleagues in the Pakatan Harapan pact were more direct in lambasting Budget 2016, tabled last Friday, Serdang MP Dr Ong Kian Ming decided to take a more satirical approach to the matter.

In a statement today, the DAP lawmaker was full of "praise" and expressed his "gratitude" towards Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak for a series of subsidy cuts under Budget 2016 which he said would cause the public to pay higher prices.

He congratulated the prime minister, who is also the country's finance minister, for coming up with the national budget which he described as "people-centric".

"'Congratulations' for a 'people-centric' budget for which I'm sure all Malaysians will be eternally grateful... until the 2017 budget, that is," he wrote.

Ong also "complimented" Najib for abolishing the RM950 million cooking oil price stabilisation scheme, under the purview of the Plantations and Commodities Ministry, which he said would most likely result in a rise in the price of cooking oil.

"I would like to 'congratulate' the PM for slashing almost RM9 billion (from RM19.3 billion in 2015 to RM10.6 billion in 2016) from subsidies and cash assistance, which would have cushioned the impact of the increase in the cost of living for many Malaysians."

In the statement, he also "praised" Najib for abolishing the electric bill subsidy which he said would almost certainly increase electricity bills for the poor who are the main beneficiaries of the subsidy.

"I would (also) like to 'congratulate' the PM for collecting an additional RM4.5 billion in goods and services tax (GST) for the year 2016 (RM39 billion in 2016 for GST alone compared to RM34.5 billion from GST and SST in 2015) from the consumers of Malaysia."

Ong added that he was confident the increase in the 1Malaysia People Aid (BR1M) payments of RM1 billion (from RM4.9 billion in 2015 to RM5.9 billion in 2016) would offset the RM10.1 billion cuts in direct subsidies and the additional RM4.5 billion in GST which would be collected from the people.

He also "thanked" Najib for increasing compensation to toll concessionaires from RM458.7 million in 2015 to RM593.3 million in 2016, despite the recent increase in toll prices at 18 major highways.

"I am sure those poor toll concessionaires which have been suffering for so many years from the low compensation and the lack of toll increases will be able to enjoy their 2016," he said.

On Friday, Najib delivered a budget described by many as an effort to help the less well-off and bolster Malaysia's economic growth, already hit by slumping oil prices, weak currency and perception problems.

Najib, who is also under fire over controversies concerning state-owned 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and a RM2.6 billion "donation" in his personal accounts, introduced measures which included increasing support for low-income families via BR1M and extra funds for affordable housing projects and development spending.

Budget 2016 involved an expenditure of RM267.2 billion compared with RM260.7 billion in 2015. – October 26, 2015.

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