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New Strait Times - Key Is To Reduce Cost Of Living

Saturday, Oct 07 2017



2018 BUDGET

KEY IS TO REDUCE COST OF LIVING

ALL parties should seize the opportunity to give suggestions to the finance minister for the 2018 Budget, which will be tabled in Parliament on Oct 27.

As caring citizens, we must give constructive and realistic suggestions so that a balanced and people-friendly budget could be tabled.

Malaysians are hoping that no new taxes will be introduced or existing taxes increased, which could impact their livelihood. They also hope that the government could introduce incentives and tax relief to reduce the increasing cost of living.

Among others, the tax relief for an income-earner's wife should be increased to at least RM8,000, while for each child, it should be raised to at least RM5,000.

The tax relief for children below 18 years has been raised to RM2,000 from RM1,000 since the 2016 Budget. Tax relief for a wife with no income has also been raised from RM3,000 to RM4,000.

I hope the government will also address other issues affecting the people, particularly the hike in food prices and other essential items, lack of affordable houses, education and healthcare services.

Some quarters claim that the

people have no problem spending on food and other necessities since restaurants and shopping malls are teeming with customers and shoppers. But, the fact is that many are complaining about the unreasonable price hikes.

The government should conduct a study on the increase in prices of food and other essential items. There are claims that the prices of some produce and products have increased by 100 per cent.

Efforts to tackle the price increase will not succeed if the authorities focus only on taking the action against traders. The process involves all parties in the supply chain – from producers and suppliers to wholesalers and retailers.

The measures must be comprehensive so that the government can control price increases throughout the supply chain through intervention and enforcement.

To deal with the lack of afford-

able homes, the authorities must work with the state governments and private sector to build more of such houses. Affordable homes must be built at strategic locations in the cities where most of the people are working.

As for transportation, the government's success in creating a more integrated and efficient public transport network in the Klang Valley should be emulated by other states.

However, I urge the maintenance culture to be enhanced

while awareness campaigns be held to encourage the people to appreciate and take good care of such facilities.

At the same time, the providers of public transport should charge affordable fares, including for feeder bus services, taxis, as well as ride-sharing services, such as Uber and Grab.

As for the education and healthcare sectors, the government should maintain the subsidies provided to the people, especially those in the low-income group.

The authorities should educate the public to save for education and healthcare, especially for their children since costs are expected to increase in the future.

To inculcate good occupational safety and health culture among workers, the government should reduce or abolish the import duty for personal protective equipment, such as safety helmets and goggles, to make them affordable.

While drafting the 2018 Budget, it is hoped that our leaders will continue to feel the people's pulse and take into consideration the challenges they are facing, especially the ever-increasing cost of living.

TAN SRI LEE LAM THYE
Kuala Lumpur

The government must address issues affecting the people such as the increase in food prices and other essential items. FILE PIC



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