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Despite challenging fiscal space, govt continues support for rakyat

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Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz (File pix)

KUALA LUMPUR, June 1 – The latest announced RM40 billion PEMERKASA Plus is evidence that the government remains committed and vigilant about people's needs and requirements in facing the health crisis despite a challenging fiscal space that is available.

"I would like to emphasise the government's commitment to protect the lives of the people by enhancing the capacity of the public health system, including the national COVID-19 immunisation programme," said Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

The government is also committed to ensure the wellbeing of Malaysians, especially those most affected by this crisis, he said at a press conference here today following the PEMERKASA Plus announcement, which involves the government's direct injection of RM5 billion additional expenditure despite the deficit already expected to be around six per cent and statutory debt nearing the ceiling of 60 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin when announcing the measures amid a renewed lockdown to curb infect.

said that it would have a big impact on the country's economy and that the government has limited fiscal space.

*However, the move was necessary to ensure the well-being of the rakyat."

The government, Tengku Zafrul said, would continue to work to ensure that no group was left behind, including informal sector workers, youths and the vulnerable.

"We are committed to supporting businesses, both big and small, and the wider economy."

"I would like to emphasise that this assistance package is a bridger in the government's efforts to move from the Revitalise agenda to the Reform agenda in the government's 6R approach."

Furthermore, this package is a continuation of previous economic aid and stimulus packages.

Therefore, PEMERKASA Plus needs to be seen together with other stimulus packages, especially PERMAI (January 2021) and PEMERKASA (March 2021) which are still being actively implemented with a value of more than RM100 billion.

"I hope the people will continue to abide by the SOP and practise self-control."

However, everyone in Malaysia has a collective responsibility to ensure safety and well-being in the fight against COVID-19, he stressed.

The number of new COVID-19 cases reported today has increased slightly to 7,105 compared to 6,824 cases yesterday, said Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

Through a post on Twitter, Dr Noor Hisham mentioned the increase of 281 cases, making a cumulative total of 579,462 cases recorded so far.

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