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Bernama - Budget 2021: RM5.1 Bln Development Allocation For Sabah, RM4.5 Bln For Sarawak

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 6 - Sabah and Sarawak will respectively be receiving RM5.1 billion and RM4.5 billion in development allocation for next year, as provided under Budget 2021 tabled at Dewan Rakyat today.

Finance Minister, Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz said the allocation is for the construction and upgrading of water and electricity infrastructure, roads, as well as health and educational facilities.

With the theme, "Stand United, We Shall Prevail", Budget 2021 was drafted based on three primary objectives, namely wellbeing of the people, business survival and economic resilience taking into consideration the current COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the people and country.

Described as an expansionary budget, Tengku Zafrul today tabled the largest budget in history valued at RM322.5 billion, with RM236.5 billion for operating expenditure, RM69 billion for development expenditure and RM17 billion under COVID-19 Consolidated Fund.

To ensure the objective of the People's Wellbeing is manifested holistically via measures to ease the burden of the

people, he said the government would be increasing the allocation for subsidy, aid and incentive for Sabah and Sarawak from RM150 million to RM200 million to implement the Essential Goods Distribution Programme , LPG and Community Drumming including expanding its implementation to 34 new areas among them Pulau Sakar in Sabah and Ulu Mujok in Sarawak.

"Through the initiative, basic necessities such as rice, sugar, flour, cooking oil, LPG gas, RON95 petrol and diesel could be enjoyed by more than 1.1 million people at controlled prices," he said.

Through assistance for farmers, breeders and fishermen, he said more than 300,000 padi farmers throughout the country, including padi planters in Nabawan, Sabah and Kanowit Sarawak will enjoy RM570 million aid with padi price subsidy, RM960 million (padi growing subsidy and incentive) including RM40 million subsidy for hill padi fertilizer.

To empower community development programmes in the two states in Borneo, Tengku Zafrul said RM41 million is allocated for Native Customary Rights programme in Sabah and Sarawak.

On the government's move to continue efforts to close the development gap between the urban and rural areas, he said RM2.7 billion was channeled to implement various infrastructure improvement programmes and projects encompassing roads, water and electricity supply, housing aid programmes, street light installation and maintenance.

He said the government would expand mobile banking service in Sabah and Sarawak to assist communities with no access to basic banking such as money transfer, bill payment as well as facility to withdraw government assistance such as Bantuan Prihatin Rakyat (BPR).

On the strategy to protect the wellbeing of the people, Tengku Zafrul said the government would be focusing on infrastructure development and upgrading of telecommunication network which is now considered as the third utility.

He said the government would be allocating RM500 million to implement the National Digital Network (Jendela) which is aimed at ensuring the interconnectivity of 430 schools nationwide and RM7.4 billion for 2021 and 2022 to expand broadband service.

With the emphasis on education as a crucial investment for a better quality of life for the future generations, the Finance Minister said the Education Ministry is still getting the largest allocation amounting to RM50.4 billion.

Among the special allocation involving Sabah and Sarawak, he said the government would be implementing 184 projects to construct and install new tube wells with an overall cost of RM120 million for rural schools in the two states.

For public transport, Tengku Zafrul said the government would be introducing unlimited monthly pass at RM5 a month for Year One to Form Six students as well as the disabled to enable them use the pass for the Beaufort-Tenom railway service in Sabah.

He said the Stage Bus Transformation programme would be expanded in phases to Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Johor Bahru and Kuantan with an allocation of RM150 million.

Touching on the survival of the tourism industry, the Finance Minister said an allocation of RM20 million is set aside to improve infrastructure and to step up promotion of cultural villages including in Sarawak.

A special caring grant of RM1,000 would be given to traders and hawkers as well as drivers of taxi, e-hailing and cab as well as tourist guides in Sabah

To improve the accessibility of the people, Tengku Zafrul said RM15 billion was allocated to finance transport infrastructure throughout the country including the Pan Borneo Highway.

For a balance development between the regions, the government has provided RM780 million for five regional economic development corridors which would also involve the Samalaju Industrial Park in Sarawak under SCORE and the continuation of the Sepanggar Bay Container Port expansion under SDC.

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