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Budget 2022 aims to spur prosperity of the Malaysian Family

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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 – The government today tabled Budget 2022 with the highest allocation ever of RM332.1 billion to implement various strategies and initiatives to prosper the people and stimulate a progressive and sustainable economy.

Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, when tabling the budget in the Dewan Rakyat, said the expansionary budget took into account the aspiration of the Malaysian Family concept and was aligned with the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) to enable the people prosper in the new normal brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Budget 2022 has been crafted as a continuation of the previous aid and economic stimulus packages, as well as improved and packaged with new efforts to make it an inclusive, sustainable and balanced budget,” he said when tabling the budget which carried the theme “Keluarga Malaysia, Makmur Sejahtera” (A Prosperous Malaysian Family).

Budget 2022 has allocations for the continued provision of direct cash aid to targeted groups of people and for empowering the education and healthcare aspects with the largest allocations to these two sectors as well as to generate employment opportunities.

Tengku Zafrul, in his speech, also announced the provision of the Bantuan Keluarga Malaysia (BKM) or Malaysian Family Assistance next year with an allocation of RM8.2 billion for 9.6 million people.

As the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to end, a sum of RM4 billion has been allocated specifically to address the COVID-19 situation by funding the vaccination programme and enhancing the capacity of public health services.

Tengku Zafrul said that in giving priority to the public health aspect to build the country’s resilience in preparation for the endemic phase of the disease, Budget 2022 allocates RM32.4 million to the Health Ministry for operating and development expenditure.

Realising that the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on social life, to the point of causing hardship, domestic violence and depression, the budget also allocates RM70 million to ensure that priority is given to the issue of mental health.

In keeping with the norm of national budgets giving focus to the education sector, Tengku Zafrul said, Budget 2022 allocated RM52.6 billion to the Education Ministry and RM14.5 billion to the Higher Education Ministry.

The government will also provide early schooling assistance of RM150 to each of the three million eligible pupils, higher than the RM100 that was given previously.

In appreciation of the services of teachers for conducting online teaching and learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget provides a RM100 one-off special incentive for teaching aids to over 400,000 teachers.

The finance minister said the use telecommunication devices was becoming increasingly important, especially for students of tertiary institutions and, as such, the government allocated RM450 million to provide a tablet to every B40 student under the 'PerantiSiswa Keluarga Malaysia' initiative.

The health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic which struck the country in 2020 had affected the employment sector and resulted in an increase in unemployment and, as such, Budget 2022 plans to create 600,000 job opportunities next year under the 'Jamin Kerja Keluarga Malaysia' initiative with an allocation of RM4.8 billion.

"It is hoped that through the implementation of the JaminKerja initiative and economic recovery measures, the country's unemployment rate can be reduced to four per cent and there will be full employment," he said.

The budget also proposed incentives to encourage employers to provide employment opportunities to specific groups such as people with disabilities, the Orang Asli and ex-prisoners as well as encourage women to return to work, besides providing tax relief to attend training and improve skills.

On the social safety net, Tengku Zafrul proposed strengthening the social protection system including increasing the rate of disability pension under the Social Security Organisation (Socso) and expanding tax relief for Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contributors who make voluntary contributions, such as those working in the gig sector.

Tengku Zafrul said various comprehensive initiatives were being taken by the government in Budget 2022 to implement the strategy of developing a Malaysian Family covering all levels of society regardless of race, religion, age, gender and region.

It covered the Bumiputera empowerment agenda which sees an allocation of RM11.4 billion to implement various initiatives under the umbrella of Bumiputera development, Islamic Syiar propagation (RM1.5 billion), development of the Chinese and Indians (RM345 million), the children of Sabah and Sarawak for deepening knowledge on culture and heritage (RM10 million) and the Orang Asli (RM274 million).

Budget 2022 also gives attention to women, including providing an allocation of RM5 million to the Women's Leadership Foundation to boost their participation in the economic sector as well as emphasising health aspects, including providing for mammogram test subsidies for high-risk women and cervical cancer screening tests.

Tengku Zafrul said that to ensure the safety of children, the government would subsidise 50 per cent or up to RM150 for the purchase of child safety seats for B40 families.

Besides upgrading the infrastructure of government buildings to make them friendly for people with disabilities, Budget 2022 proposes a special quota of one per cent for the MyStep programme for people with disabilities as well as for the government to fully cover the motor vehicle licence payment of all private vehicles owned by people with disabilities.

Tengku Zafrul said that in the effort to build a conducive life, the government allocated over RM31 billion for subsidies, aid and incentives in Budget 2022 to minimise the impact of the rising cost of living with effective control of the prices of goods and services.

Recognising the difficulty of transport access in the interior of Sabah and Sarawak, the government has allocated a RM209-million subsidy for air transport services for the benefit of the local population.

The government will continue to improve the well-being of the rural population in the effort to reduce the development gap between regions and, as such, has allocated over RM2.5 billion for rural infrastructure including construction of roads and provision of water and electricity.

To ensure there is no compromise in terms of national security and public order, Budget 2022 allocates RM16 billion and RM17 billion to the Defence Ministry and Home Ministry, respectively.

The government has allocated RM1.6 billion to implement seven initiatives, such as the Wage Subsidy Programme targeted at tourism industry players and specific funding for the tourism sector as a means of rehabilitating the sectors worst hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Budget 2022 has allocated RM188 million to provide a boost for creative industry activities, in the form of the Digita

Content Fund, Digital Multimedia Content projects, Film Incentives, Human Capital Empowerment programmes and Socso protection for artists.

In providing the latest broadband facility - Jalinan Digital Negara (JENDELA) initiative - for the Malaysian Family, Tengku Zafrul said, the government has allocated RM700 million to continue with digital connectivity efforts in 47 industrial areas and 630 schools, particularly in the rural areas.

The budget also has allocations for the continued provision of subsidies and incentives for the agriculture and fisheries industries, with respective allocations of RM1.7 billion and RM1.5 billion.

In his two-hour speech presenting the budget, Tengku Zafrul also announced a Special Financial Assistance of RM700 for the 1.3 million civil servants on Grade 56 and below and RM350 for about one million government pensioners in appreciation of their sacrifices in the delivery of services to the people.

He also announced an increase of the maximum rest leave replacement of 150 days to 160 days in recognition of the sacrifices of civil servants during the handling of the COVID-19 crisis.

"In dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, many civil servants, especially those on the frontline, remained committed to their duties and some of them did not have the opportunity to take leave," he said.

Tengku Zafrul said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob would chair a monitoring committee coordinated by the Finance Ministry to ensure that all the Budget 2022 initiatives achieve the targeted objectives.

Budget 2022 is the first national budget under the government led by Ismail Sabri.

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