

**PM: 2023 Budget will be prepared with people's wellbeing at its core**

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The government will ensure the 2023 Budget is prepared with the people's wellbeing at its core by taking into consideration the challenges that await next year, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob. - Bernama pic

PUTRAJAYA: The government will ensure the 2023 Budget is prepared with the people's wellbeing at its core by taking into consideration the challenges that await next year, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He said among the main focuses of the budget was to ensure post-Covid-19 recovery, which will include creating jobs, increasing income and ensuring the survival of businesses.

"In facing global uncertainties, the 2023 Budget will also focus on the people by improving protection systems and boosting the wellbeing of the people through quality healthcare and education."

He was speaking at the closing of the 2023 Budget Consultation programme at the Finance Ministry here yesterday.

Ismail Sabri said the government would also focus on ensuring a safe and comfortable living environment for the people by emphasising inclusive and sustainable development.

"The aim is to allow all members of Keluarga Malaysia to benefit from present and future developments, regardless of community or area."

Ismail Sabri said various issues and challenges were raised during consultations on the 2023 Budget and solutions proposed to tackle the issues would be studied in detail.

Proposed solutions include taxation, subsidies, social protection, business continuity and industrial sustainability, including reducing the cost of doing business by boosting the development of human resources, skilled workers, productivity and business digitalisation, he said.

He said there were proposals to strengthen cooperation between various quarters to expedite the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda at the national level by 2030.

Ismail Sabri said the country's economy was showing strong recovery in the first half of the year, marking a growth of 6.9 per cent following the government's implementation of the transition to the Covid-19 endemic phase.

He said he was confident the post-Covid-19 economic recovery momentum would continue until the end of the year, allowing the country to achieve the growth forecast of 5.3 to 6.3 per cent.

"Based on the latest economic indicators, growth in 2022 is expected to be higher in the projected range."

Ismail Sabri said the country's economic recovery momentum was not only measured in gross domestic product growth, but also in the recovery of the labour market.

He said this had been achieved, as can be seen in the fall in the unemployment rate from the peak of 5.3 per cent in May 2020 to 3.8 per cent in June this year.

On foreign investors' confidence in the country's economy, he said it was stronger as foreign direct investment saw a higher net inflow of RM41.7 billion in the first half of the year, up from RM23.3 billion in the same period in 2019.

Even though the country's economic growth this year is on an encouraging recovery trajectory, Ismail Sabri reminded the people that Malaysia is still expected to face global challenges next year.

He cited as examples the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the disruption in the global food supply chain and central banks worldwide tightening their monetary policies.

"As an open economy, we are not spared from global developments.

"Disruptions in the global supply chain has caused a steep rise in the prices of food and commodities."

Ismail Sabri said in June this year, the inflation rates in developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom had surpassed nine per cent, while in neighbouring countries like Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines, it was above six per cent.

For the people's wellbeing, he said, the government implemented measures to control the price of goods and improve aid and subsidies for essential items.

He said as a result of this, the inflation rate in the first half of the year remained at a controlled level of 2.5 per cent.

He said the government's allocation for aid and subsidy had risen to a whopping RM77.7 billion this year, compared with RM31 billion last year.