

# Economist hopes govt will increase affordable housing

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The 2019 budget is being planned in an uncertain global environment when the world economy is slowing down and world oil price experienced a sharp decline in recent years.

Dr Rafiq Idris, an economist and senior lecturer from Financial Economics Program, Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) stated that this situation is very challenging for the government, having in mind the target to further reduce the budget deficit.

“With regard to the 2019’s budget which will be tabled by the Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, I would like to share my budget ‘wishes,’” he said.

In this upcoming budget, it is hoped that the government will touch on these major areas among others; increase the number of affordable housing, increase allocations for health and education; expenditure which will stimulate the GDP growth immediately and specific allocation for Sabah.

“First of all, increase the number of affordable housing in Malaysia. To complement the existing housing programs, I believe more allocations are needed so that more Malaysians can own a house,” he said.

It should be targeted on the B40 and M40 groups, he added.

Secondly, it is hoped that the allocation for education and health sector will be increased.

“The education and health sectors are among important areas that contribute to the economy and the wellbeing of Malaysians.”

The allocation for these should not be compromised, he stressed.

“Thirdly, it is hoped that the budget will be an immediate growth stimulating budget.”

It would stimulate the GDP growth in the first half of 2019, he stated.

“If money is being spent in the first half of 2019, only then it has the potential to have an impact for 2019.”

For Sabah specifically, it is hoped that the incentives for down streaming activities (in whatever forms) be introduced, he said, adding this can further stimulate the state’s economy in the long run.

Furthermore, specific allocation for the improvement of water and electricity supply in the state is



Dr Rafiq Idris



necessary, Rafiq stressed.

This is important for the wellbeing of the people and business community.

“Stable supply of water and electricity supplies are also crucial in attracting direct foreign investment into Sabah.

“In addition, specific budget for the Kota Kinabalu International Airport expansion is important.”

The increase of tourists inflow would require the expansion of the existing airport, according to him.

Moreover, projects under national corridor programs should be continued.

“I hope projects such as Pan Borneo Highway and Port Transshipment Hub in Sepanggar among others will be continued.

“In satisfying the needs and wants of Malaysians, I believe the government is striving in showing a prudent and discipline financial management and budgeting for something that is within its affordability.”

“We hope the budget is a relief for all Malaysians, inclusive, balance and growth stimulating spending,” he said, adding that he hoped the reduction of imbalanced development between states/regions in Malaysia as depicted in the recent Mid-Term Economy Review will be translated in the upcoming budget.