

MEDIA STATEMENT

IDEAS: Budget process must be maintained for full budget accountability

30 August 2022, Kuala Lumpur - Following the recent news that the tabling of the national budget will be brought forward to 7 October instead of the originally planned date of 28 October, IDEAS today called on the federal government to use the opportunity to deliberate on the budget and other important legislation such as the anticipated political financing and fiscal responsibility bills more rigorously.

"In the past two years since the change of government, the government tabled the budget in November and the parliament passed the budget less than one month before the start of the budget year. By tabling the budget earlier, Parliament will have more time to discuss the budget and other important legislation that will be beneficial for the country in the long term such as the political financing and fiscal responsibility bills.

"Each year, the tabling of the national budget is the event that is most highly anticipated in the policymaking and business sector, and rightly so as the budget lays out a comprehensive roadmap of all expenditures that are intended for the following financial year, including the much-desired incentives and benefits especially for the vulnerable groups and households in the recovery phase. Given the seriousness of this budget document, IDEAS believes that any government has a responsibility to ensure that a thorough process is maintained. The responsibility falls not only on the cabinet, but also on backbenchers and opposition to balance policymaking needs with the political process. This includes ensuring that the budget team has sufficient time to receive all comments and feedback from all sectors and groups through the series of consultations the Ministry of Finance is currently conducting; also, sufficient time to prepare a detailed and programmatic budget for 2023. We call on parliamentarians to focus on permitting both policy and committee stages of the budget to be followed through; and finally, having the budget Parliamentary debate run its full course", commented Dr Tricia Yeoh, CEO of IDEAS.

IDEAS has long championed the issue of budget transparency and accountability and calls on the government to ensure that any preparation towards the main financial document of the government is done to completion, as is normally the case. Just like any other budget, this year's budget needs to take into account the country's medium to long term fiscal goals, and not merely stop at a year-long focus.

"We also want to express our concern over the rumours of the reason behind this early tabling of the budget, which is to call for an earlier election. We hope that this is not the case. Partisan or political interests should not be placed before the welfare of the nation, for example, hastening the budgetary process in order to serve vested interests of a certain segment. Moving forward, it would be in the nation's interest to determine when the general elections will be held and the date should ideally be announced as soon as possible. This would ensure that the nation's energy will not be wasted in discussing when general elections should be conducted. Furthermore, such predictability will be useful for all stakeholders including the business community and investors. The interests of the nation need to be the priority and must always be the foundation of any policy-making decision ", concluded Dr Yeoh.

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About IDEAS

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