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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 6 - The government proposes to provide an allocation of RM1 billion under Budget 2021 to stem the third wave of COVID-19, Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said today.

The allocation is in addition to the RM1.8 billion that it had provided this year to implement COVID-19 movement control measures as well as public health services, including to buy Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), reagents and consumables, he said.

Tengku Zafrul, in tabling Budget 2021 in the Dewan Rakyat, said the proposed RM1 billion allocation comprised RM475 million to purchase reagent supplies, screening kits and consumables for the use of the Health Ministry.

"RM318 million is for the provision of PPE and hand sanitiser to all Health Ministry frontliners. A sum of RM150 million will be allocated to the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA) to coordinate measures to combat COVID-19.

"RM50 million is to be provided for procurement of equipment, laboratory test supplies and medicines by university teaching hospitals and augment dental facility operational equipment, virtual clinical services and provision of screening zone facility and thermometers at health facilities to meet the new normal SOPs," he said.

It is to be noted that the Health Ministry has spent about RM400 million to combat the worsened COVID-19 situation in Sabah, which included sending food aid to houses and medical equipment.

He said the government is committed to obtain COVID-19 vaccine, through COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access programme or COVAX.

"The supply of COVID-19 vaccine involves a cost exceeding RM3 billion to meet the needs of the people," he said.

Tengku Zafrul said the government proposed to expand the scope of tax relief for medical treatment expenses covering vaccination expenses such as pneumococcal, influenza and COVID-19.

He explained that the tax relief would be for vaccination expenses for the taxpayer, spouse and children, limited to RM1,000.

"The government will also raise the tax relief on medical treatment expenses of the taxpayer, spouse and children for serious illnesses from RM6,000 to RM8,000 and raise the tax relief for full health examination expenses from RM500 to RM1,000," he said.

He said that additionally, the tax relief on expenses for medical treatment, special needs and parental care will be raised from RM5,000 to RM8,000.

-- Bernama

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