

# KERATAN AKHBAR

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## Rafizi calls for new focus on agriculture, change in mindset



About 60% of the food consumed in Malaysia is imported with the food import bill amounting to RM554 billion.

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia should reduce its dependence on food imports by investing in agriculture, economics affairs minister Rafizi Ramli said today.

He said this meant reallocating funds to the upstream segment of the sector, a strategy he conceded had not previously been regarded as attractive enough for a modernising economy.

Rafizi said the government will make an announcement on reallocation of resources in the coming months.

The change in focus would need “a big shift in the mindset for both society and the private sector,” he said at the unveiling of the Malaysia Economic Monitor report by the World Bank here today.

All Malaysians would need to go through a big change and also accelerate and embrace this change.

As much as 60% of the food consumed in Malaysia is imported. In 2020, the food import bill amounted to RM554 billion.

Rafizi said Malaysia recorded the highest growth among the Asean countries, underlining the resilience of the nation's economy that until now has been largely underestimated.

The 14.2% expansion recorded in the third quarter of 2022 was driven by strong domestic demand across all sectors in line with the resumption of economic activities post-Covid-19.

He called on the people to take the opportunity from the Covid-19 experience to fully embrace digitalisation. "Let's take this chance to reset our ways. It's time to digitalise and embrace new processes. We need to move outside our comfort zone," he said.

Rafizi said the government was reviewing how it could use digitalisation to provide public service.

"We need to move away from the analogue framework of the past. Think outside the box and redesign government service mechanism centred on the need to completely digitise. It will make us more efficient," he added.

Malaysia should be defined by policies, not policymakers

Rafizi acknowledged that there was a lot of excitement and expectations for the new administration, but said he took comfort in the government's "good policy framework".

The minister added that the nation should be defined by the policies in place rather than policymakers.

"This country should never be defined by four or five people who come into the government.

"It should be defined by the soundness of the policy frameworks that take into account all stakeholders."