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THE country's economic performance this year under Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's leadership will not fare worse compared to the former administration led by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, says Rafizi Ramli.

The Economy Minister said this was based on government data which showed recovery in nearly all sectors, except for agriculture.

"So, if YB Pagoh (Muhyiddin) wants to say the economic performance this year will be worse, the economic data that we have does not support your statement," he said during Question Time.

Rafizi was responding to a supplementary question by Muhyiddin who asked about the government's immediate plans to assist vulnerable groups amid the looming global recession.

"This year, the situation may worsen. Maybe, many will lose their jobs and the B40 will become B60," he said, adding that the Economic Stimulus Package during his administration had targeted incentives amounting to RM200bil.

To this, Rafizi said even if the gov-



Meeting the people: Rafizi delivering a speech at the Ministry of Economy yesterday. — Bernama

ernment could allocate RM200bil of targeted incentives, the present administration had inherited huge debts from the previous government.

He said if the country were to take on more debts, it was set to face

higher international interest rates.

"This will cause huge government debts to be inherited by the future generation. The government is already paying RM40bil in debts that we inherited.

"There are ways to recover the

MSME (micro, small & medium enterprise) and look after the vulnerable groups without taking on more debts as done by the previous Perikatan Nasional government," Rafizi added.

Mohd Shahar Abdullah (BN-Paya Besar) then interjected and said that high government spending would commensurate with economic development and higher tax collections.

"I hope we can be open. What is the GDP growth for Q1 this year under the present government?" he asked.

In response, Rafizi said there had to be a balance between government spending and the ability to take on debts.

"That is why under the 11th Malaysia Plan, we have to reduce our deficit, so that by 2025, our deficit will be only 3.5%.

"Budget 2023 is the largest budget in our history. So the issue of lack of spending by the government does not arise," he said.

The federal budget, which was revised to RM388.1bil, is expected to be passed in Parliament later this month.