THIS WEEK'S TOPIC
What did you find most interesting about Malaysia's latest Budget? Were there any other important issues that you would like to have seen addressed?
THE Budget contained few surprises and not much of great interest. The increase was modest – about the same as growth in GDP – and there was something for almost everyone. I would have liked to have seen a more direct and comprehensive development of an energy strategy. The incentives for the use of natural gas, which is clean and plentiful, are useful. Some changes make the system better for users of diesel fuel. And the development of bio-fuels may be helpful at the margins.

It is politically difficult and could be disruptive in the short term to substantially reduce subsidies for petrol, but behavioural changes in the consumption of petroleum and the inefficiencies that result from the availability of cheap petroleum products are not likely to change so long as there is protection from market forces.

– Howard Hunter
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