



01 AUG, 2025

Aid rises, but economic strain persists

The Star, Malaysia



Aid rises, but economic strain persists

GEORGE TOWN: Although cash aid programmes like Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) and Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (Sara) are welcomed relief efforts, there are calls for the government to address the root cause of financial hardship in the lower-income group.

Housewife Azimah Aziz, 41, said the initiatives are timely, but stressed the need to reduce the impact of rising prices of essential goods.

"While the cash handouts help ease the pressure temporarily, they do not solve the economic challenges that low- and middle-income families face every day.

"Without stronger price controls and a progressive wage sys-

tem, many Malaysians may remain trapped in a cycle of dependency," she said.

During the tabling of the 13th Malaysia Plan yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the annual STR and monthly Sara cash aid initiatives would be expanded.

The Sara programme will benefit 5.4 million recipients, up from 700,000 previously.

It includes a one-off RM100 cash aid for all Malaysians aged 18 and above. Additional cost-saving measures include subsidised public transport and domestic airfares for students, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, as well as electricity bill reductions

under Tenaga Nasional Bhd's Time-of-Use scheme.

Professional photographer Allen Lim, 52, praised the government's support for needy families from the Chinese and Indian communities.

"It is a noble act to address this issue, as the cost of living affects all communities in the country," he said.

However, he noted that rather than injecting funds into new villages, the government should consider positioning it as a hub for tourism and the creative economy, backed by sustainable and forward-looking policies.

Anwar said infrastructure and public amenities would be

improved to enhance social connectivity and quality of life among the Chinese and Indian communities, including women, youths and senior citizens.

The Chinese community will benefit from the implementation of the New Village Development Master Plan, which includes financing schemes for entrepreneurial activities and the upgrading of hawker stall sites.

On the Indian community, Anwar said focus would be placed on increasing career opportunities through education and talent development, especially in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, as well as Technical and Vocational

Education and Training.

Civil servant M. Loga, 26, welcomed the RM40bil allocated to the healthcare sector.

"It is a timely move, especially given the rising cost of medical treatment. The allocation will strengthen and improve our public healthcare system," he said.

Loga said many long-overdue projects, including the upgrading of dilapidated clinics, modernisation of medical equipment and improved healthcare access in rural areas, could be expedited.

He hoped that a portion of the funds would be directed towards reducing patient waiting times and increasing the number of employees at public hospitals.