

Give beggars in kind, and not cash, generous Malaysians told

By GERARD GIMINO

gerard.gimino@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Malaysians are a generous lot with many quick to give some cash to beggars but more often than not, such kindness is being taken advantage of.

Recently, there was an incident in Pahang where a beggar was found to have collected up to RM500 daily through public donations to the point of even owning a Proton X70, raising questions on whether they should be given cash.

Social activists say instead of cash donations, the public should offer assistance in kind to prevent the money from being misused.

Suriana Welfare Society chair-

man Dr James Nayagam said the public could donate goods based on what was requested.

“Pure begging should not be encouraged. It’s best to speak with these individuals and find out what they need. If they need food, you can buy it for them or provide other necessities if needed,” said James.

James added that it would be better to donate to those who offer a service instead of begging.

“They could be selling tissues, busking or even singing. At least these individuals are earning the money,” he said.

For situations where some groups go around asking for cash donations for a charitable cause, James said the public should

request for a direct contact number to the organisation.

“This type of activity should be discouraged. If these groups say donations can be made through a QR code payment, take note of the account name that appears (when making the payment).

“If it is of an individual and not the organisation, then it’s a red flag,” he said.

Echoing the same sentiment was Malaysian Association of Social Workers life member Vijayakumari Pillai.

“If these individuals come asking for money to buy food, it’s better to bring them to the restaurant to eat or pack food for them,” she said, adding that if they were unhappy, it could be a sign that

the person was not genuine.

Vijayakumari said there were also instances where she offered help in kind and referred them to the Social Welfare Department, but was instead told off by these “beggars”.

She added that groups coming around asking for donations should also have a police permit for that purpose.

“We want to move away from giving money, as we don’t want the country to reach the point where begging becomes increasingly common.

“The people know where to go for help but sometimes they prefer begging,” she said.

On cases of some individuals selling goods at traffic light stops,

Vijayakumari said it would be best to report such cases to the local authorities.

“It can affect the safety of both the sellers and road users,” she added.

In February, *StarMetro* reported that beggars and homeless individuals were becoming an increasingly common sight in Kuala Lumpur.

In the report, a Kuala Lumpur City Hall spokesperson said beggars were not under its purview, adding that they were under the Social Welfare Department’s jurisdiction.

The Social Welfare Department was contacted for comments on the matter but had yet to respond as at press time.