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BUDGET BOON FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

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SEVERAL initiatives for the disabled in the 2021 Budget will not only help during tough times but sustain them in the future through various employment opportunities.

Damai Disabled Person Association Malaysia president V. Murugeswaran said many people with disabilities had lost their source of income due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the imposition of the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO).

"They are unable to leave their homes to work or conduct small businesses such as selling handicraft due to the restrictions. Some of them are trying to do online businesses but they do not have the ability and knowledge for it.

"Therefore, the monthly aid for the disabled who cannot work, a total of RM300 up from the previous RM250, is a relief for them. For those who still have jobs, the increase of allowance from RM400 to RM450 is very much appreciated.

"The financial aid will certainly tide them through this difficult period and prepare them for the future," he said.

Murugeswaran said there were 560,000 registered disabled individuals nationwide and only about half were receiving the aid for disabled workers earning less than RM1,200.

He voiced concern that this group of disabled workers might be unaware that they were qualified to receive assistance.

BELANJAWAN

2021

"We need to reach out to this group to explain that they are eligible," he said.

Murugeswaran said the government's move to offer higher incentive to employers for hiring disabled workers under the PenjanaKerjaya programme was laudable.

Such an incentive, he said, gave hope to the disabled to gain employment and also motivated employers to give them the chance to be part of the nation's workforce.

"This is an opportunity to get disabled people into mainstream society where they can learn to be independent.

"With this incentive, I also hope more employers will open up jobs for the disabled to work and at the same time, ensure that work spaces are disabled friendly," he said.

Murugeswaran added that the incentive for employers goes well with the RM5 unlimited monthly travel pass for train and Klang Valley commuter services for the disabled.

"These are the integrated initiatives that would help empower the disabled group."

Meanwhile, tailor Fuad Sanoesi, who will receive a RM450 allowance, said the amount would help him cope with the rising cost of living.

"I welcome any amount as it will help me financially. There is an

additional RM50 and that is good enough to cover my expenses," said the 55-year-old, who is wheelchair bound.

Fuad, a father of one who lives in PPR Taman Wahyu, said he looked forward to train rides with the RM5 unlimited travel pass.

"I am an active person and I would take the train to 'jalan-jalan' with my disabled friends. With this travel pass, we will get to explore more places. I hope this privilege will be extended for many years.

"It is also beneficial for disabled individuals who do not have their own transport. Now it will not cost a lot for us to move around," he said.

As for the elderly, the RM50,000 financial aid to operate the Senior Citizens Activity Centre by NGOs in the 2021 Budget will spur an active aging population.

National Council of Senior Citizens Organisations Malaysia (NASCOM) deputy president Datuk Dr Soon Ting Kueh said the monetary boost will enable more activities to be organised.

"The move to increase the funds is good and it must be sustained. It promotes an active and productive aging society where they can take part in various classes and learn how to use computers to sing, dance or learn a new language.

"All these activities are free and they can mix with their peers."

Soon added that the extension of the additional tax deductions for employers for hiring senior citizens until 2025 was welcomed as it motivated senior citizens to return to work.



Fuad Sanoesi



V. Murugeswaran



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DATUK DR SOON TING KUEH

National Council of Senior Citizens Organisations Malaysia (NASCOM) deputy president

INITIATIVES TO EMPOWER THE DISABLED (OKU)

Monthly aid for OKU incapable of work to be raised to RM300 from RM250

Allowance for OKU workers to be raised to RM450 from RM400

OKU care assistance to be raised to RM500 from RM350

RM5 unlimited travel monthly pass for train services, Klang Valley commuter, northern sector commuter, train between Kuala Lipis, Tumpat and the Sabah Railway train Beaufort-Tenom route

Incentive for hiring OKU workers under PenjanaKerjaya - 60 per cent incentive to employers from monthly salary (maximum of RM4,000)

RM5,000 tax relief for OKU couples increased from RM3,500

Home Help Services Programme RM400 honorarium value for volunteers and a maximum of RM80 for clients

Strengthening Special Education [RM45 million]



ASSISTANCE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Special Targeted Financial Assistance

- RM300 one-off for government pensioners
- RM500 one-off for non-pensionable veterans
- RM500 one-off for Pingat Jasa Pahlawan Negara recipients
- RM500 to imam, bilal, siak, noja, merbut, takmir teachers and Al-Quran and Fardu Ain (KAFA) teachers
- RM300 monthly for fishermen's cost of living allowance

Senior Citizens Welfare Assistance RM500 a month, an increase from RM350

Home Help Services Programme [RM18 million] -RM400 honorarium value for volunteers and RM80 for clients

Jaringan Prihatin Programme RM180 one off telecommunications credit for Bottom 40 group

