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Proving that a family can live comfortably on RM1,500 a month

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Six families were today announced winners of the first Comfortable Family Living competition organised to show that it was possible to live comfortably with an income of RM1,500 or less.

The families, each with at least four children, were selected based on their income and how they managed their money and other criteria such as living standard/basic amenities and level of savings.

Zainal Abidin Ahmad Redzuan from Kuala Kangsar, Perak, won the town resident's category while Zahari Junin from Kampong Janglau, Pontian, Johor, topped the rural resident category.

They each received RM3,000 and a certificate from Deputy Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk S. Subramaniam. Also present were ministry secretary-general Datuk Mohd Noor Abdul Rahim and deputy secretary-general (consumerism and commerce) Mohd Nor Mohd Yassin.

A registration assistant at the Kuala Kangsar Registration Department, Zainal Abidin earns about RM1,300 a month and supports four school-going children aged between 10 and 16 years.

"It is not difficult to survive with this much money," Zainal Abidin said, "if your spending is carefully planned."

Family support, he said, was essential and he had made it clear to his children that their father was not rich and they accepted that.

Zainal Abidin, 45, also encourages his children to save and organises yearly competition to see who could save the most. The winner will earn a prize.

"My children get 50 sen a day as pocket money but my wife usually prepares some cakes for them, so they save most of their pocket money which they can use for paying school and examination fees."

Zahari, 47, a driver at Rompin Agriculture office, said careful spending was the key to balancing the household income with the expenditure.

His wife Rusima Asin, 37, who handles the household expenses, said she was careful to spend only on essential items.

She said the family also saved on their marketing as they maintained a small piece of land near their house as a vegetable farm.

The other winners for the town category were Salimin Daima from Muar (second prize) and Mohd Noor Mustaffa from Gua Musang (third prize).

In the rural category, the other winners were Halid @ Abd Ghani Abdullah from Simpang Banggol Lalang (second prize) and Mohd Quazli Abdullah from Kg Bebuloh Darat, Federal Territory of Labuan.

Subramaniam said the aim of the competition, organised by his Ministry, was to inculcate careful spending and saving among the populace.

The competition was launched on June 4 last year by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during the World Consumers Day celebrations.

Subramaniam said the RM1,500 figure was chosen because that was the average income for the lower income families.

Asked whether RM1,500 were enough for families living in cities like Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Baru, Subramaniam said generally yes but it depended on the individual families and their circumstances.

"It is possible for a family living in low-cost City Hall flats to live on that sum if their money is carefully spent," he said, adding that on the whole the cost of living was much higher in the city.

Subramaniam said the national cost of living had increased over the past several months but that was due to usual price fluctuations and steps were

being taken to bring it down. (END)