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101,385 apply for Employment Insurance System benefits under Socso, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR

A TOTAL of 101,385 people have applied for Employment Insurance System (EIS) benefits under the Social Security Organisation (Socso) up to Dec 3.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the number of applicants who had lost their jobs was evidently higher this year compared with 40,000 workers last year and 24,000 in 2018.

He said 52 per cent of those who applied for the EIS benefits had a monthly income of RM2,000 and below.

"The Covid-19 crisis has impacted the global economy. Based on the World Bank's estimation, some project an increase of 88 million to 115 million people around the globe falling into the hardcore poor (data).

"The Covid-19 pandemic and



Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin

Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia have caused a rise in unemployment and is expected to increase the number of poor and hardcore poor households," he said in reply to a question from Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu (Perikatan Nasional-Tambun).

He added that data was being gathered to identify new groups which were falling into the hardcore poor and poor categories.

"The government understands the difficulties faced by people living in the rural and urban areas due to Covid-19 and the MCO.

"Hence, focus is being given on improving people's wellbeing

and addressing the needs of the rural and urban poor.

"Based on a study on the urban poor and people's wellbeing conducted on 500 families in 16 People's Housing Projects in Kuala Lumpur by the United Nations Children's Fund in October, it was found that the unemployment rate among adults in the community was 35 per cent, with one in two households living in poverty, which is higher than last year."

He said social assistance had been extended to the people, including the RM2.2 billion allocated under the monthly federal financial aid allowances for next year, compared with RM1.5 billion this year, as well as the overall RM5 billion allocation for the Bantuan Sara Hidup allowance that has benefited 4.5 million recipients this year.

In addition, he said RM18.2 billion was also allocated for the Bantuan Prihatin Nasional (BPN) scheme introduced under the Prihatin economic stimulus package and Kita Prihatin, with 10.6 million people having benefited from BPN and 9.86 million people from BPN 2.0 so far.

"The government will continue to focus on addressing the poverty agenda in the country's de-

velopment plan.

"A special cabinet committee to address poverty was established on Sept 2 to discuss related matters pertaining to policies, strategies and initiatives, including the roles of relevant ministries.

"This is to ensure that those in need receive assistance and do not fall through the social security safety network."

To a supplementary question by Faizal, Muhyiddin said RM6.8 million would be allocated to upgrade the existing e-kasih database on underprivileged people next year.

He said e-kasih, developed in 2007, would be enhanced, with ongoing efforts being carried out to improve the situation while balancing the people's economic, social and health needs.

"I realise that the old system is not so effective. This is why steps to update it with (the use of) new technology is being done to ensure more accurate data.

"Efforts are also being made to implement a new method, but still under the e-kasih platform.

"Detailed information in all areas will be gathered and with the cabinet we will ensure that assistance is extended to the targeted groups."