

PEDi empowers small entrepreneurs and rural community, says PM

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THE setting up of Keluarga Malaysia (Malaysian Family) Digital Economy Centres (PEDi) can help create and empower small entrepreneurs towards innovative and competitive digitalisation and improve the socioeconomic status of the people, especially the rural community.

Prime Minister (PM) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector has been the pillar of the country's economy, making up almost 1.2 million or 97.2% of the total businesses as at the end of 2020.

However, he said that most MSMEs were still less competitive and needed to be empowered especially after being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"PEDi is a one-stop centre to bring the small entrepreneurs closer to the digital economy. Various programmes have been lined-up to help these entrepreneurs to kick-start their business or increase the demands for their products.

"It is hoped that these small entrepreneurs will then be able to expand their business further with online access and by using e-commerce platforms.

"The ability of small entrepreneurs to adapt to digitalisation and technological developments will enhance their efficiency and sustain their business in the long run," he said.

Ismail Sabri said this at the launch of PEDi at Kampung Durian Tawar in Bera yesterday, which was

also attended by Communications and Multimedia Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa and his deputy Datuk Zahidi Zainul Abidin, as well as Minister in the PM's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

The PM said that the small entrepreneur empowerment programme would be led by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission with the cooperation of the relevant agencies and industry players, with the target of getting 800,000 small entrepreneurs to benefit from PEDi by 2025.

He said 873 existing PEDi would be upgraded to one-stop centres for rural digital economic activities, 37 new PEDi will be opened in the first quarter of 2022, and another

173 by the end of next year, bringing the total to 1,083 PEDi to be operational nationwide.

As Bera Member of Parliament, Ismail Sabri said 1,158 people from the parliamentary constituency had registered as PEDi members to use the centre to attend entrepreneurship classes, and that he was told that some of their businesses were now booming.

"The government is confident that the programme will encourage the local communities, especially youths, to equip themselves with sophisticated digital knowledge to compete in building a better future, especially those who are keen on venturing into business or entrepreneurship.

"It is also hoped that the existing

entrepreneurs would be able to increase their productivity, make more profits, sustain their businesses and at the same time, create job opportunities for other people," he said.

Apart from the MSMEs, Ismail Sabri said PEDi would also benefit 15.4 million people, especially those in the bottom 40% group and in rural areas, by exposing them to digital knowledge so that they too can participate in digital economic activities.

This, he said would not only bridge the digital gap between the people in urban and rural areas but also lead to digital innovation that could fulfil the country's aspiration to develop the digital economic agenda. — *Bernama*