

'SEMARAKNIAGA TO ASSIST MSMEs'

Govt committed to ensuring capabilities of MSMEs are protected, says PM

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THE RM40 billion SemarakNiaga Keluarga Malaysia (SemarakNiaga) programme launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob yesterday will complement other efforts rolled out by the government to assist micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to rebound from Covid-19's economic aftermath.

He said the programme, coupled with aid such as Bantuan Banjir Keluarga Malaysia, reflected the principles espoused by the government under his leadership to ensure that no quarters would be left behind.

He likened the aim of all the aid introduced by the government to the Malay proverb, *bagai berdiri sama tinggi, duduk sama rendah, bersukat sama paras, bertimbang sama berat* (when people enjoy the same social status).

"During my visit to Farm Fresh in Muadzam Shah recently, I had the opportunity to interact with small and big entrepreneurs.

"The session gave me a clear picture of their role in creating employment opportunities subsequently closing the income di-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob speaking at the launch of the SemarakNiaga Keluarga Malaysia programme in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. **BERNAMA PIC**

vide and addressing long-term challenges such as food security.

"The contribution and role of local MSME entrepreneurs are important in the country's economic recovery.

"Therefore, the government is always committed to ensuring the capabilities of the business sector, especially the MSMEs, are protected as they are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic," he said.

Present were Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz and his deputies, Datuk Mohd Shahar Abdullah

and Yamani Hafez Musa.

SemarakNiaga, said Ismail Sabri, would boost access to financing facilities for the business sector, especially entrepreneurs from the MSMEs and informal sector.

"The programme encompasses direct loans, financing guarantees and equity injections that will benefit all groups of entrepreneurs."

Financial facilities allocated under SemarakNiaga — through the 2022 Budget — included RM14.2 billion in SME loans.

Of the RM14.2 billion alloca-

tion, the government has set aside RM200 million for the Informal and Micro Financing Scheme, or SPIM, which offers up to RM10,000 in zero-interest loans with priorities given to businesses from the informal sector.

"For entrepreneurs in the agro-food industry, AgroBank is offering micro-credit financing scheme of up to RM75,000 at zero interest rate for the first six months as well as moratorium facilities of up to six months."

The government, alongside financial institutions, he said, had

also devised a new and more flexible form of financing facilities to enable MSME entrepreneurs to expand their capabilities subsequently help them to revive their businesses.

He said such facilities included equity crowdfunding and peer-to-peer financing, which would be supported by RM80 million in the form of a matching grant for the Malaysia Co-Investment Fund, in addition to the investment of RM100 million by Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd (BPMB).

"To assist companies with high gearing ratio, more than RM2.2 billion in financing method through equity and quasi-equity investment are available for them under this programme.

"This measure is being spearheaded by the SME Bank, which has allocated RM600 million for this purpose. BPMB also offers a reset scheme, or Rehabilitation and Support Through Equity.

"Bank Negara Malaysia also offers Business Recapitalisation Facility worth RM1 billion for the same purpose."

The government, he said, under SemarakNiaga, also set aside RM22 billion in guarantees through Syarikat Jaminan Pembiayaan Perniagaan.

"After almost two years dealing with the challenges brought about by the pandemic, this year will not only be the year of recovery, but will also be the year to restructure or reform.

"I hope the SemarakNiaga Keluarga Malaysia programme could become the catalyst for the MSMEs community to recover and restructure their businesses."