

'RISE IN CASH AID WILL EASE PEOPLES BURDEN'

PM acknowledges hardship caused by rising prices, vows to ensure a dignified life for the people

KUALA LUMPUR

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday expressed hope that the significant increase in the Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) payments this year will alleviate the people's burden.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the maximum STR payments for households had risen by more than 66 per cent to RM500, from RM300 last year.

He acknowledged that the hardship caused by the rising prices of goods was a major problem afflicting a large portion of the population.

"The Madani government is committed to ensuring a dignified life for the people. The key to national stability lies in fairness and social justice, as envisioned in the Madani Economy framework.

"I hope recipients of Phase 1 of the STR will make the best use of this assistance," he said in a post on his Facebook page.

Payments for Phase 1 of the STR to 8.2 million people began yesterday.

The payment will be credited into bank accounts or channelled in cash through Bank Simpanan Nasional in stages to those registered in the STR database.

Under STR Phase 1, households

with income of between RM2,501 and RM5,000 will receive RM100 to RM300 each, while senior citizens with no spouse and single folk will receive RM150 and RM100 each, respectively.

The STR is among the government's aid programmes to alleviate the burden of Malaysians.

The RM150 Early Schooling Aid (BAP) for each student aims to reduce the burden of parents and guardians of students. It is being distributed this month ahead of the start of the 2024 school term.

Parents have expressed their gratitude to the government for the initiative, which involves an allocation of RM788.1 million under the 2024 Budget.

In Perlis, Civil Defence Force personnel Corporal Zubaidah Mohamad Al Bakri, 48, said she would use the money to buy school necessities, books and sports attire for her children.

"I have 10 children. Five are still schooling, three are in secondary school and two are in primary school. This assistance is a relief."

In Penang, clinic assistant Noor Shamira Mohd Noor said the BAP helped her family prepare school necessities for her three children.

Noor Shamira and her husband Mohd Azhar Hamzah, 40, said they were grateful for the aid especially as the new school term would start during Ramadan.

In Terengganu, labourer Ibrahim Zakaria, 37, from Paka, said he often worried about affording his childreil's schooling needs when a new term is around the corner, especially clothes, books and stationery.

The father of three said he sometimes borrowed money from relatives

to buy school necessities, which cost more than RM500.

"For other people, RM500 may be small, but for us, it is a huge amount. It's a month's worth of groceries. I have not worked for two weeks because a project has just been completed.

"*Alhamdulillah*, with this help, I will be able to buy new shoes and bags for my children."

In Pahang, private sector worker Leong Chung Keong, 48, said his Form Four daughter would use the BAP to buy exercise books, while his 11-year-old son would save the money for future use.

Nurse Yusliza Razali, 40, said she was happy to receive the aid.

"The cost of schooling increases as a child grows up. This money will allows us to ensure that every child's needs can be met as best as possible."

In Negri Sembilan, Norafidah Assan, 38, said the new school term was close to Ramadan, so she would need to manage her expenses better.

In Johor, mother of two Nur Amienah Md Shukor, 46, from Batu Pahat, said she hoped the aid would continue.

"The aid will really help low- and middle-income groups."

Noor Azura M Amin, 35, said the money would alleviate the people's burden, especially those who have more than one school-going child.

In Kelantan, housewife Norzaren Atirah Kamarul, 30, said she was grateful that her three children received the aid and would use it as best as possible.

"This RM450 is a big amount. I will buy school uniforms and shoes for my kids." **Bernama**