

# Guan Eng meets Penang industry players for dialogue session on COVID-19 impact

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BUTTERWORTH, Feb 16 -- Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng today met with relevant industry players here for a closed-door dialogue session on the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses.

The Bagan member of parliament told reporters prior to the session that the industries could also put forward their suggestions for consideration in the proposed economic stimulus package to be announced on Feb 27 by Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asked further about the stimulus package, Lim replied, "There are various measures.. I do not want to detail; otherwise, I think there'll be no point in making the formal announcement on Feb 27; please wait for the prime minister to make a full and complete announcement.

"But we are willing to receive any proposal like I said, I will have a dialogue session with some industries but it is closed-door," he said after opening a McDonald's drive-thru outlet at Bagan Ajam.

In a statement yesterday, Lim stressed that the economic stimulus package was neither a new budget nor part of the policies in Budget 2020 but a form of aid to the affected industries.

Meanwhile, he said the Malaysia@Work initiative to create jobs for the unemployed would be implemented in April, with the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) being entrusted to manage the disbursement of RM6.5 billion that has been allocated for the programme.

Through the initiative, 350,000 jobs for Malaysians are expected to be created over the next five years.

"The government wants to create or generate job opportunities for the unemployed and the Malaysia@work programme will be opened for registration in April; we are giving an incentive of RM500 to each worker who had been unemployed for a long time, to further motivate them, and RM300 a month to employers to encourage them to hire local workers," Lim said.

Separately, McDonald's aims to expand its restaurant chain to 450 by 2025 with an investment of RM1.4 billion that will also create 10,000 new jobs in Malaysia.

According to its local operations partner and managing director Azmir Jaafar, there are 290 McDonald's Restaurants nationwide with a pool of 15,000 employees.

The Bagan Ajam drive-thru outlet is the 16th of 24 McDonald's Restaurants in Penang and the biggest in Seberang Perai, operating 24 hours with 80 workers comprising locals.

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