

Easier placement swaps soon

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New system to allow healthcare staff to exchange postings

By RAGANANTHINI
VETHASALAM
raga@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: Healthcare workers in the same service scheme will soon be able to easily swap placements with one another to move to a different facility, or even a different state.

The Health Ministry's digital Mutual Posting Swap Platform, known as the Suka Sama Suka Posting Swap Platform, is set to begin operations this month.

The first phase will begin with nurses.

Speaking to *The Star*, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the ministry's system is shaping up well.

"Our Suka Sama Suka platform is coming soon, and it will be a real testbed for nurses," he said.

"The system was developed in-house. They have done a number of stress tests on this.

"We will really get to see how this happens soon. Honestly, this

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is something I am so delighted about."

It was previously reported that the system will allow healthcare workers under the same scheme to be able to swap postings without the involvement of the Human Resources Division.

With the Suka Sama Suka platform, a nurse interested in a transfer simply needs to log in to the system and find another nurse under the same scheme who is also interested in transferring.

They can refine their search based on the desired state, facility and position.

The system will then match the two candidates to facilitate the placement swap.

Under the arrangement,



Dzulkefly: 'The system was developed in-house. They have done a number of stress tests on this.' — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

officers with permanent employment can swap with other permanent staff, while those employed under contract can swap with

others under contract.

The healthcare workers involved in a swap must also have the same medical specialisation.

Officers whose applications have been approved will not be able to cancel their applications. A new application can only be submitted after two years.

They must also report for duty simultaneously with their partner.

The transfer will be cancelled if either party fails to report to their new workplace.

Commenting on the development, Malayan Nurses Union president Saaidah Athman said the transfer process will be more transparent with such a system in place.

"An applicant can see how many people have applied for the same placement. Suka Sama Suka will not burden staff," she said.

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United for protection

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Whole-of-society approach key to safeguarding Malaysians

KUALA LUMPUR: At the World Social Security Forum (WSSF) 2025, government ministers delivered a united call for bold reforms to strengthen social protection, stressing that care must extend to every segment of society.

They emphasised that a whole-of-society approach is essential to ensure no one is left behind.

Human Resources Minister Steven Sim said Malaysia must move urgently to modernise outdated systems to reflect new forms of work and shifting demographics.

"The Madani society is like a body – every part must work together to ensure healthy function. Even the little toe, if lost, can disrupt the way the body moves. That is why we must protect the weaker parts even more."

Sim highlighted the passage of the Gig Workers Bill as a milestone, guaranteeing platform workers access to accident, health and retirement benefits.

"Our goal is to move beyond welfare and build a comprehensive Social Protection Floor that supports every Malaysian across the life cycle – whether you're a gig worker, homemaker, disabled, unemployed or elderly," he said, adding that a National Social Protection Blueprint is in its final stages.

"Social protection is no longer charity – it is a right and a necessity in a just economy."

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad underscored that social and health security are



(From left) Sim, Dzulkefly, Social Wellbeing Research Centre director Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Norma Mansor, Nancy, Gobind and Yeoh after the special plenary session at WSSF 2025 in Kuala Lumpur.

inseparable.

"The strength of a nation's healthcare system lies not in serving the strongest, but in safeguarding the weakest and underserved. There can be no social security without health security," he said, calling for stronger cooperation across public, private and non-government sectors.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri stressed the need to recognise and reduce the burden of unpaid care work, particularly for women.

"We cannot modernise our economy without modernising our care systems. Recognition, redistribution and reduction of care burdens are key," she said.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo pointed to technology as a powerful enabler of social protection.

"From AI-powered claims to inclusive platforms for gig workers, digital transformation must empower the most vulnerable," he said, adding that a Digital Trust Strategy will be launched in 2026.

Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh emphasised policies tailored to the needs of young people and athletes, such as maternity leave for national athletes.

"Security means different things to young people. We must meet them where they are – in sports, in tech and in their everyday lives," she said.

The collective push for reform drew applause from over 2,000 delegates.

Belgium's National Employment Office CEO Jean-Marc Vandebergh praised Malaysia's leadership, saying the country's efforts to protect gig workers were ahead of many others, including his own.

"The speed and desire of Malaysian ministers to tackle issues before they escalate from AI to climate change to ageing – is admirable."

EPF Investment Panel chairman Datuk Mohamad Nasir Ab Latif also lauded the initiatives, urging stronger inter-ministry cooperation to address long-standing challenges such as childcare, school nutrition and labour laws.

How to help elderly patients manage diabetes

DIABETES affects nearly one in three Malaysians over the age of 60. Managing the condition is not just about attending clinic appointments; it also involves making choices about food, taking medicines and living a healthy lifestyle.

Many elderly patients find it a struggle to cope with their condition because the information they receive is difficult to understand or apply. This is when health literacy – the ability to use health information and services to make informed decisions – comes in.

In the case of diabetes, it's about whether an elderly person understands when to take their medicine, what a balanced meal looks like or what their blood sugar numbers mean.

Without this clarity, small misunderstandings can have big consequences. For example, one may skip medication, misinterpret the phrase "after meals" or believe unverified advice from friends or social media. The results can be unnecessary hospital visits, serious complications or loss of independence.

For many elderly people, the barriers are real. Medical terms like "HbA1c" or "neuropathy" sound foreign; small print on labels is hard to read; and explanations given quickly in crowded clinics are difficult to follow.

Some hesitate to ask questions, afraid of being seen as uneducated. In the end, they go home with prescriptions and pamphlets but without the confidence to manage their condition.

The good news is that small changes can make a huge difference. Using plain words, providing large-print instructions, and showing visual aids such as food charts or colour codes can help elderly patients absorb information more easily.

Families also play a vital role, whether by helping them to read medication labels, reminding them about check-ups or practising healthier eating together.

Peer support is another powerful tool. Elderly patients can teach and encourage one another, using examples that feel familiar and practical.

The results can be life-changing. A grandmother once misunderstood her "after meals" medication and took it only after lunch. A simple explanation corrected her routine, improving her blood sugar level.

By helping elderly patients understand their conditions, we can give them the confidence to live their golden years with strength, dignity and hope.

SEGUFTA DILSHAD
PhD candidate
Family Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia



Wong pointing to a flock of pigeons at the Rejang Park Traffic Garden in Sibü.

Pigeon menace at Sibü park raises public health concerns

THE growing pigeon population at the Rejang Park Traffic Garden in Sibü, Sarawak, is raising public health concerns.

Irene Wong, special assistant to Sibü MP Oscar Ling, said she had received multiple public complaints on the long-standing issue of pigeon feeding at the park.

"This has led to a growing pigeon population and caused serious environmental and hygiene problems," Wong said in a statement.

Besides being a popular place for exercise, the park also has playground facilities for children.

Wong said the park was often crowded in the early mornings and evenings.

However, pigeon droppings litter the jogging track and surrounding facilities.

She said once exposed to the sun, the droppings turned into powder which was easily carried by the wind.

If inhaled by parkgoers, it could cause respiratory infections or irritate the eyes, she added.

Wong said there was also a primary school located nearby hence there was a need to watch out for the pupils' safety and health too.

"Although pigeons are common birds, their droppings can cause harm.

"Long-term congregation of pigeons not only affects environmental cleanliness but also poses the risk of disease transmission," she said.

Besides urging people not to feed pigeons, Wong also called on Sibü Municipal Council to instal visible signboards to remind visitors to the park.

She also called for awareness campaigns to encourage the people to maintain a clean, safe and comfortable public space. — By ANDY CHUA

Sarawak mulls licence for cats

Rabies deaths from feline bites and scratches on the rise in the state

By SHARON LING

sharonling@thestar.com.my

KUCHING: Sarawak may introduce cat licensing as a measure to combat rabies in the state, says Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian.

He said the move was in view of recent rabies deaths involving cat bites or scratches.

“When the outbreak started in 2017, the cases mainly involved stray dogs.

“But now, nearly 50% of positive animal cases involve pet dogs. And increasingly, we also have people dying from cat scratches,” he said after opening the Rabies in Borneo conference.

Dr Sim said Sarawak was consulting experts for advice on rabies strategies for cats.

“Meanwhile, we will look into licensing cats, but this requires changes to our law. Our law only specifies licensing dogs.

“It’s not because we want to charge licensing fees (for cats), but we want data on the number of cats,” he said.

According to records from the state Health Department, two out of four rabies deaths this year were due to cat bites or scratches.

Since 2017, there have been a total of 80 rabies-related deaths, of which nine were attributed to cat bites or scratches.

Dr Sim reminded dog and cat

owners to get their pets vaccinated against rabies.

Individuals who have been bitten or scratched by animals are advised to cleanse the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for a duration of 10 minutes. It is crucial to seek immediate medical attention following such incidents.

“Rabies is preventable. No one should die from rabies,” he said.

In his speech earlier, Dr Sim said Sarawak aims to achieve zero human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030.

He said new strategies were being explored to improve monitoring, vaccination coverage and long-term disease control.



Preventable: Dr Sim (left) looking at a rabies poster at the Rabies in Borneo conference in Kuching. — ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star

Expanding workers' protection coverage

Ensuring that no sector is left out

MALAYSIA'S 3.5 million workers have near excellent legal, occupational, environmental and representative protections, which are set out in comprehensive labour laws, standards and practices. Chiefly, the Employment Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act cover workers regardless of their salary range. The laws cap working hours to 45 hours per week, mandate overtime pay, extended maternity leave of up to 98 days and seven days of paternity leave. There are provisions forbidding all forms of harassment. Rules also govern flexible working arrangements that recognises modern work-life balance while the minimum wage was recently raised to RM1,700 monthly. The Social Security Organisation offers support in the event of occupational injuries and the Employees' Provident Fund sets aside a nest egg for retirement.

Still, the informal sector and domestic helpers have slipped past this wide safety net. Waiting to be gazetted is the land-

“Is there already enough protection for workers? Not just yet. Next is the proposed Non-Employment Injury Scheme to cover injuries beyond work hours to reflect new work culture and patterns.”

mark Gig Workers Act, which provides the same rights and protections for 1.2 million Malaysian gig workers. While the laws are adequate, some employers resist compliance, especially when it comes to paying a minimum wage and providing flexible work. The oft-heard excuse is cost. Sexual harassment, discrimination and non-standard employment issues are still ongoing but workers can rely on the law to seek a remedy. Key aspects of these stringent laws are backed by trade unions, who deal directly with government and employers' representatives in the National Labour Advisory Council. But a major query has not been answered: after these legal protections come into force, will gig

workers opt to unionise? This will be the new challenge facing trade unions. The decades-long struggle of electronic workers to unionise only bore fruit in 2024, when restrictions on the sector were removed from the Trade Union Act.

Is there already enough protection for workers? Not just yet. Next is the proposed Non-Employment Injury Scheme to cover injuries beyond work hours to reflect new work culture and patterns. Also called the Non-Workplace Accident Scheme, it acknowledges that work-related risks and injuries can occur outside traditional working hours. It appears to be a good deal: round-the-clock protection and coverage for all workers, including gig workers, homemakers, freelancers and remote workers, who have been historically excluded from social security coverage. It's also sensible; over 85,500 non-workplace accidents were reported as of late last year. Its practicability will only be known once the NLAC fine-tunes its provisions but the objective is just: no community, including those in remote areas, will be excluded from social security protection. Soon every worker in Malaysia will be protected.

Coping with 'misunderstood' autoimmune disease

► Now undergoing remission, SLE patient had to overcome challenges as condition affected lungs, heart, kidneys

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) quietly strikes thousands of Malaysians - mostly women - yet this crippling autoimmune disease is widely misunderstood, often ignored and dangerously misdiagnosed.

Malaysia SLE Association executive secretary Illani Azalia Zainal Abidin, 32, who is a lupus patient herself, knows the danger all too well. At 27, a sudden flare nearly killed her.

"It started with swelling of my face and hands. Three doctors said it was an allergy, while another suspected dengue," she said.

"My body was changing and I did not understand what was happening. My hair was falling out. It was horrible."

Only a private specialist finally gave the correct diagnosis - SLE or lupus, a chronic condition in which the immune system attacks the body's own organs and tissues.

While the association has over 4,500 registered members, Illani said many more cases go undiagnosed, especially among men.

"About 90% of patients are

Apakah SLE?

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) atau secara ringkasnya dikenali sebagai lupus, merupakan salah satu gangguan pada sistem imun. Sistem imun, yang sepatutnya melindungi tubuh, bertindak menyerang bahagian tubuh. Ia boleh memberi kesan kepada pelbagai bahagian tubuh seperti sendi, kulit, buah pinggang, jantung, paru-paru, pembuluh darah dan otak.

Siapakah Penghidap SLE?

Tamir 90% daripada mereka yang menghidap SLE adalah kaum wanita; 10% merupakan kaum lelaki dan kanak-kanak. SLE yang dihadapi oleh kaum wanita biasanya bermula pada usia muda dan boleh melahirkan komplikasi.



Illani said about 90% of patients are women, usually aged between 15 and 50, while many more cases go undiagnosed, especially among men.

- ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

women, usually aged between 15 and 50," she said.

Her battle didn't end with the diagnosis. Within a year, lupus had attacked her heart, lungs, and kidneys, causing lupus nephritis - a potentially life-threatening complication.

"Public hospitals collect samples in batches and results take days. Meanwhile, I am getting sicker," she said.

Early treatment in the private sector saved her life, but drained her savings.

The biologic drug Rituximab brought temporary relief but cost between RM7,000 and RM8,000 per vial - four cycles plus hospital fees cost about RM40,000.

"I didn't even have insurance then," she said.

When Rituximab stopped working, doctors suggested chemotherapy. She refused, eventually switching to an oral transplant drug approved only after months of paperwork.

Today, her daily routine is strict: kidney medication morning and

night, steroids at midday, each dose carefully timed with or without food.

The physical strain was only half the battle. High-dose steroids triggered depression.

"I wasn't suicidal but I didn't want to wake up," she admitted. Intensive therapy - three sessions a week at first - helped her regain control.

Her family also felt the impact.

"They would tiptoe around me, afraid stress would trigger a flare. It can make a home feel dangerous," she said.

Joining the association was transformative, she added.

"Before that, people pitied me. Here, nobody pities you - they just get it," she said.

Monthly online sessions connect patients and caregivers nationwide, offering advice and support.

Access to care remains uneven, with rheumatologists available in Kuala Lumpur or Johor, while patients in Pahang or Sabah sometimes travel for hours - even by boat - just to see a doctor, she said.

Now experiencing remission, Illani still takes medication three times a day, attends monthly therapy and guards her energy.

"My friends schedule outings at night or indoors to accommodate my sensitivity to heat and light."

Lupus has reshaped her personal dreams.

"The only challenge now is whether I can become pregnant," she said, adding that adoption is her path forward.

Her message to fellow patients is blunt and clear:

"Learn about your body - its triggers, its limits and get support. Lupus follows you everywhere," she said.

'Doctors now better equipped to catch early lupus signs'

PETALING JAYA: More Malaysians are being diagnosed with SLE or lupus – not because the disease is more prevalent but because doctors are now better at detecting its elusive symptoms, says Malaysia SLE Association president Prof Dr Syahrul Sazliyanah Shaharir.

"The rise is likely due to improved awareness among primary care doctors and other specialists about the diversity of lupus presentations and organ involvement," she said.

Yet public awareness remains weak compared with cancer or diabetes.

"Lupus is mainly managed by rheumatologists or nephrologists, so it doesn't get the same spotlight."

Asked if general practitioners can catch early signs, Syahrul said many are now better equipped.

"Yes, especially those who attend seminars, workshops or conferences on autoimmune diseases. But the bigger challenge is access to specialists.

"Malaysia still does not have enough, though both the Health Ministry and the Higher Education

Ministry are working to address this."

Syahrul said treatment often involves steroids – life-saving in critical situations – along with immunosuppressants and biologics.

"Costs can be prohibitive but government facilities cover most medications, easing the financial load for patients," she added. For association executive secretary Illani Azalia Zainal Abidin, lupus is not just a medical condition but a daily battle that extends far beyond the hospital.

The 32-year-old said medication kept her illness under control but the real struggle lay in emotional support and finances.

"People don't understand what we go through," she said.

"Sometimes you just need someone to talk to."

Regular therapy sessions remain essential and she credits the association's monthly online "shared-care" meetings, where patients nationwide connect virtually to reduce the sense of isolation.

"But staying alive is expensive. Even basic drugs such as the immunosuppressant mycophenolate

(CellCept) can be costly and public hospitals occasionally face shortages," she said.

"You relearn how to live. Camping, hiking, the things I love most are not on the cards anymore unless I plan every detail."

Employment adds another layer of difficulty.

Many employers quietly avoid hiring people with lifelong conditions that require frequent hospital visits.

"I understand their concerns, but it's disheartening. It has been very hard for me to find new jobs."

One former supervisor, however, stood out for his support – asking what adjustments she needed, offering indoor parking to shield her from the sun and even paying for it. Insurance coverage, however, remained out of reach.

Family planning is equally fraught. Pregnancy is possible but risky for both mother and child.

She recalled friends who made difficult choices.

One had three children, two of whom developed lupus –

highlighting the complex mix of genetic and environmental factors still not fully understood.

Stigma, too, deepens the struggle. Because lupus is often labelled a "women's disease", men may delay seeking treatment, despite typically experiencing more severe complications.

She hopes workplaces will evolve to support lupus patients rather than shut them out.

"Employers should learn how to support staff with chronic illness instead of turning them away," she said.

Flexible hours, understanding about medical leave and clear policies could help patients remain productive while protecting their health.

Despite the challenges, Illani remains determined.

"Therapy gives me the tools to stay functional," she said.

"And being part of the association shows me people can return to work, raise families and live fully – even after the worst flare-ups."

– By **KIRTINEE RAMESH**

Stretching your Sara aid: Cut waste, eat healthier and save more

COMMENT by Ang Zheng Feng

IMAGINE stacking 3,500 Petronas Twin Towers by weight. That is how much food the world wasted in 2022: a staggering 1.05 billion tonnes.

In Malaysia, we throw away 17,000 tonnes of food every day, and almost a quarter of it is still edible. That is enough to feed three million people three meals a day even as households struggle with rising grocery bills.

Food waste is not just about tossing out leftovers; it is a triple threat to our economy, environment and food security. Globally, food waste accounts for 8% to 10% of greenhouse gas emissions. It also squanders the resources needed to produce, transport and prepare food – including land, water, energy and labour.

Households are largest food wasters

Many assume that hotels and buffets are the main culprits but food waste starts at home. A study by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia found that households contribute 38.2% of the country's food waste – more than hotels, restaurants or markets. In comparison, wet and night markets account for 24.5%, food courts and restaurants 23.4% and hotels 6.9%.

Smarter shopping, mindful eating

Researchers from Universiti Putra Malaysia found that nearly half of all

household food waste is due to spoilage and loss of freshness.

Simple habits like planning meals, buying only what is needed and repackaging bulk groceries into smaller portions can help reduce waste and save money.

Through World Vision Malaysia's Eat Right to Play Right programme, we work with families in People's Housing Programme communities to reduce food waste.

Parents learn to plan meals using the Malaysian Food Pyramid 2020, portion meals appropriately and eat food safely. This helps cut waste and lower grocery bills.

Eating habits also play a role. Rice, noodles and vermicelli make up nearly 75% of plate waste while vegetables, which Malaysians already consume too little of, are often discarded.

The National Health and Morbidity Survey 2023 found that 95.1% of adults don't consume enough fruits and vegetables, reflecting poor dietary habits and contributing to unnecessary food waste. One solution is to eat mindfully and stick to the recommended portions. This helps families save money and lower the risk of obesity and related health issues.

Sustainable food system

In a world of plenty, 673 million

people still go to bed hungry – a stark reminder that hunger is not just about food production but also about poverty and access.

In Malaysia, organisations like The Lost Food Project, Food Aid Foundation and Yayasan Food Bank rescue surplus food from supermarkets, hotels and markets, redistributing it to vulnerable communities.

We can support their efforts through donations, volunteering or partnerships.

Reducing food waste is essential for building a sustainable food system – one that ensures nutrition and food security for all without

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shows that when families are equipped with the knowledge and skills to manage their food resources wisely, they can save money and redirect it towards essentials like education, helping to break the cycle of poverty.

Beyond the RM100 Sara aid

To help ease the cost of living, the government recently provided a one-off RM100 Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (Sara) payment to all individuals aged 18 and above.

While reactions to the RM100 aid were mixed, preventing food waste is key to making that amount stretch at least 25% further.

As we use our Sara aid, it is



In Malaysia, we throw away 17,000 tonnes of food every day, and almost a quarter of it is still edible. That is enough to feed three million people three meals a day. – **SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN THESUN**

important to remember that preventing waste is just as valuable as bargain-hunting. Every ringgit saved by reducing waste is a ringgit earned for the family.

By shopping, cooking and eating responsibly, we not only nourish ourselves but also contribute to a more sustainable food system for Malaysia's future.

Quick tips to stretch your RM100 and cut waste

➡ **Plan before shopping** – make a grocery list and stick to it.

- ➡ **Store smart** – follow “first in, first out” and use proper storage methods.
- ➡ **Portion wisely** – order smaller portions of rice or noodles when dining out and finish your vegetables.
- ➡ **Check expiration labels** – “Use by” = safety; discard after this date. “Best before” = quality; if the food looks, smells and tastes fine, it is generally safe to eat.

Ang Zheng Feng is a health and nutrition officer with World Vision Malaysia. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Perumahan, pendidikan, kesihatan antara tumpuan Belanjawan 2026

Perancangan digariskan dalam RMK13 bakal jadi tunjang utama pembentangan

Oleh Mahanum Abdul Aziz
mahanum_aziz@bh.com.my

Perancangan yang digariskan dalam Rancangan Malaysia Ke-13 (RMK13) bakal menjadi tunjang utama pembentangan Belanjawan 2026 yang dijadualkan Jumaat minggu depan.

Menteri Kewangan II, Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan, berkata Belanjawan 2026 yang akan dibentangkan Perdana Menteri, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim itu adalah belanjawan yang pertama di bawah RMK13.

Katanya, Belanjawan 2026 akan dirangka berasaskan hala tuju RMK13 serta Kerangka Ekonomi MADANI yang menjadi dasar pembangunan negara ketika ini.

"RMK13 memberi hala tuju yang jelas kepada rakyat untuk melihat di mana keutamaan negara diletakkan. Antara tumpuan adalah pembalut bagi menambah baik sektor perumahan, pendidikan dan kesihatan," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang media selepas merasmikan Minggu Ekonomi Dan Kewangan Awam (MEKA) 2025 bertemakan



Belanjawan 2026 akan dirangka berasaskan hala tuju RMK13 serta Kerangka Ekonomi MADANI. (Foto hiasan)

RMK13: Melakar Semula Pembangunan di Kuala Lumpur, semalam.

Yang hadir sama, Ketua Setiausaha Kementerian Ekonomi, Datuk Nor Azmie Diron dan Timbalan Ketua Pengarah Perkhidmatan Awam (Pembangunan), Datuk Dr Mohd Bakhari Ismail.

Amir Hamzah yang menjelaskan tanggungjawab dan fungsi Menteri Ekonomi berkata, RMK13 adalah satu benda yang penting untuk negara memandangkan ia akan melorakkan Malaysia untuk mencapai status negara berpendapatan tinggi

menjelang 2030.

Beliau berkata, rancangan lima tahun itu berteraskan Kerangka Ekonomi MADANI bagi meningkatkan siling dengan meningkatkan kerencanan ekonomi negara serta meningkatkan lantai agar darjat rakyat dapat ditingkatkan dan semua dapat merasa kehidupan yang lebih baik pada masa hadapan.

Tingkat tatakelola kerajaan

Beliau berkata, kerajaan juga komited meningkatkan tatakelola kerajaan dalam semua urusan untuk penyampaian perkhidma-

tan kepada rakyat.

Tambahnya, kerajaan juga yakin dengan pendekatan menyekutkan negara ke arah lebih baik, sekali gus menjamin kesejahteraan rakyat dalam jangka masa panjang.

"RMK13 menjadi bukti komitmen keseluruhan negara untuk merealisasikan aspirasi Ekonomi MADANI dengan memastikan peningkatan darjat hidup rakyat terus menjadi keutamaan," katanya.

Sementara itu, Amir Hamzah berkata kerajaan yakin bera-

da dalam landasan tepat untuk mencapai sasaran defisit fiskal bawah 3.0 peratus dalam jangka sederhana, hasil disiplin kewangan ketat yang dipraktikkan sejak beberapa tahun lalu.

Beliau berkata, usaha itu mula membuahkan hasil apabila kadar defisit fiskal terhadap Keluaran Dalam Negara Kasar (KDNG) yang berada pada paras 6.1 peratus empat tahun lalu berjaya diturunkan kepada 4.1 peratus pada tahun lalu, manakala bagi tahun ini pula sasaran ditetapkan untuk turun lagi kepada 3.8 peratus.

"Alhamdulillah, kita berada pada landasan yang betul. Kerajaan berpegang kepada prinsip tadbir urus yang baik, menghapuskan pembaziran dan menutup ruang ketirisan," katanya.

Amir Hamzah menjelaskan, langkah penstrukturan semula subsidi bagi memastikan hanya golongan yang layak benar-benar menikmatinya memberikan kesan positif kepada kedudukan kewangan negara.

Katanya, hasil pinjaman itu bukan sahaja membantu mengurangkan defisit, malah sebahagiannya disalurkan semula untuk meningkatkan bantuan kepada rakyat.

Katanya, antara inisiatif yang diperluaskan termasuklah Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR), Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (SARA) serta bantuan warga emas, selain penambahbaikan terhadap kemudahan sekolah dan hospital di seluruh negara.