



**PRESS STATEMENT**

**KUALA LUMPUR (24 JANUARY 2021)** - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) commemorates the International Day of Education which falls on 24 January every year. This year's theme 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation' is apt as it portrays one of the main challenges faced by many around the world including Malaysia, which is access to education.

Equal access to education is the most basic human right provided under Article 12 of the Federal Constitution. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only caused severe health and economic impacts, it has also posed challenges for students in accessing education. While schools and universities has resorted to technological solutions to conduct online classes and lectures for students, this did not ensure access to education for all as the underprivileged students faced difficulties in accessing online education due to the lack of access to internet or technological devices. In this regard, SUHAKAM commends the noble efforts by various parties including non-governmental organizations and Members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies to provide laptops and tablets for the underprivileged students.

SUHAKAM notes that RM47.2 billion has been allocated to the Ministry of Education and RM11.6 billion to the Ministry of Higher Education in Budget 2021 to provide quality education in the country. In the midst of the pandemic, the Government should also focus on the mitigation of the learning loss and prevent dropouts particularly among the vulnerable groups in the country. In this regard, SUHAKAM urges both Ministries to expedite the improvement of the educational facilities and provide the necessary assistance to enable online education and a conducive learning environment for all in every corner of Malaysia, leaving no one behind. SUHAKAM also calls for the implementation of precautionary measures and strict implementation of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) to ensure the safety of students who are involved with examinations and required to attend school in person.

SUHAKAM is of the view that human rights education is an integral part of the efforts to eliminate racial polarisation and discrimination in the national education system. As an effort to promote the inclusion of human rights education in schools, SUHAKAM, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has so far implemented the Human Rights Best Practices (ATHAM) program in 469 schools throughout Malaysia. Furthermore, SUHAKAM adopted its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan in 2020 and one of its strategic objectives is to eliminate racism through education. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the implementation of human rights education, SUHAKAM is committed to work with the Ministry of Education to expand and improve the implementation of human rights education in Malaysia.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)**

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