



**MEDIA STATEMENT  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

**EDITOR, NEWS DESK**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**POSITIVE ECONOMIC STEPS, SIGNIFICANT HUMAN RIGHTS  
CONCERNS REMAIN**

**KUALA LUMPUR (21 OCTOBER 2024)** - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) acknowledges the efforts of the government under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in presenting Budget 2025. The initiatives aimed at equitable economic growth, fiscal responsibility and governance reforms are commendable. However, while the Budget reflects positive steps in Malaysia's fiscal policy and development, it falls short in addressing critical human rights concerns, particularly in areas affecting marginalized and vulnerable groups.

SUHAKAM welcomes the government's focus on children, including incentives for special needs (OKU) children and tax breaks for parents of children with autism. Efforts to tackle child malnutrition in public housing (PPR) and the increased allocation to agencies dealing with online safety, child pornography and cyberbullying are positive. The strengthening of relevant laws to address scams and cybercrimes targeting children, as well as the introduction of new legal frameworks, represents a proactive step towards protecting children in the digital age.

Despite these improvements, SUHAKAM stresses that the Budget 2025 lacks clear plans to safeguard the rights of migrant workers, refugees and stateless individuals. These communities continue to face exploitation, with limited access to healthcare, education and legal protection. Stronger frameworks are needed to prevent human trafficking and exploitation, ensuring these groups can access justice and basic services, in line with Malaysia's international obligations.

The Budget mentions infrastructure projects for rural and indigenous communities but fails to address the protection of indigenous peoples' land rights. Their participation in decision-making on development projects remains limited, often resulting in displacement and loss of traditional lands. SUHAKAM emphasizes the importance of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in all development activities to preserve their rights and cultural heritage.

On gender equality, Budget 2025's focus on gender-based violence (GBV) remains inadequate. The absence of specific allocations for strengthening legal frameworks and support services for victims is alarming. SUHAKAM urges the government to prioritize protection for women, particularly in addressing domestic violence, sexual harassment and workplace discrimination.

Malaysia's aging population continues to grow, yet their specific needs remain largely unaddressed. Access to healthcare, social protection and protection from abuse are essential human rights that cannot be overlooked. SUHAKAM calls for a comprehensive national aging policy that guarantees the dignity and rights of elderly citizens. In addition, while poverty alleviation is a government focus, the Budget lacks a human rights-based approach to economic and social rights. Marginalized communities continue to struggle with inadequate housing, food security and fair wages. SUHAKAM stresses the need for legal protections that ensure equitable access to resources, affordable housing and decent work for all, especially low-income families.



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Mental health services, especially post-pandemic, remain critically underfunded. While economic recovery is emphasized, there is limited attention to community-based mental health care. SUHAKAM calls for greater resources to be allocated towards mental health services, ensuring that individuals with mental health conditions receive the necessary care and protection.

Additionally, the budget does not sufficiently address the rights and needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs). The lack of focus on accessibility, inclusive education and employment opportunities is concerning. SUHAKAM urges the government to align its policies with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ensuring equal access to public services and economic opportunities for all PWDs.

While institutional reforms are mentioned, Budget 2025 falls short in addressing access to justice for vulnerable groups. SUHAKAM advocates for comprehensive legal reforms to ensure marginalized communities can access justice and hold perpetrators of human rights violations accountable.

On a positive note, SUHAKAM recognizes the increased budget for the judiciary, the boost to the National Cyber Security Agency (NACSA) in tackling online safety issues - including for children - and the anticipated Online Safety Bill. The rise in cash aid under Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) and the allocations for combating child malnutrition in PPR areas are steps in the right direction.

Despite these commendable initiatives, the minimum wage still does not reflect the actual cost of living, as evidenced by reports from the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK). Additionally, the Baitul Mahabbah program continues with no expansion to cover all children below 18 years, nor an indication of family or community placement.

SUHAKAM acknowledges the government's commitment to fiscal responsibility and governance reforms in Budget 2025. However, we urge the government to ensure that its economic growth strategies are inclusive and that human rights, particularly for marginalized communities, are at the forefront of national development. A Budget that truly supports the people must address not only fiscal concerns but also the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms for all.

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

**Date: 21 October 2024**