

SUHAKAM CALLS FOR A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN BUDGET 2026

KUALA LUMPUR (6 October 2025) – The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) underscores that the national budget is not only a fiscal tool but also a moral and legal obligation of the Government to protect and fulfil the rights of all people in Malaysia. In light of the upcoming tabling of the 2026 Supply Bill (Budget) by the Minister of Finance on 10 October 2025, SUHAKAM urges that Budget 2026 be firmly grounded in a human rights framework, with emphasis on the following priorities:

i. Protecting Low-Income Households Amid Subsidy Reforms

With subsidy rationalisation underway, targeted assistance must ensure that low-income households are not left vulnerable to rising costs of living. Safeguards are needed so that fiscal reforms do not disproportionately burden the poorest communities.

ii. Expanding Social Protection to Informal and ‘Missing Middle’ Workers

Many workers in the informal sector and those in the so-called ‘missing middle’ remain excluded from social protection. Budget 2026 should expand coverage of social safety nets, including health insurance, retirement savings, and income support, to these groups.

iii. Ring-Fencing Health and Education Budgets

Health and education are fundamental rights that require guaranteed and sustained financing. SUHAKAM calls for both sectors to be ring-fenced from budget cuts, ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare and education, particularly for marginalised groups.

iv. Prioritising Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience

Climate change poses existential risks, especially to vulnerable rural and coastal communities. Budget 2026 should allocate resources for climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and community resilience programmes to protect lives and livelihoods.

v. Fiscal Responsibility Anchored in Rights

Fiscal discipline must not come at the expense of rights. Responsible budgeting should be guided by the principles of equity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that every ringgit spent advances the dignity and well-being of people.

vi. Strengthening Oversight Institutions

Parliamentary and independent oversight bodies must be adequately resourced and empowered to ensure that allocations are implemented effectively and free from misuse. Strong institutions are key to maintaining public trust in the budget process.



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vii. Providing Adequate Funding to SUHAKAM as a Legal Obligation

The Government has a statutory duty under Section 11(1) of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act 1999 (Act 597) to provide SUHAKAM with adequate funding to effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate. Budget 2026 must therefore reinforce the independence and capacity of SUHAKAM by guaranteeing sufficient resources for its human rights work as mandated by the Paris Principles.

In conclusion, SUHAKAM reiterates that Budget 2026 is an opportunity to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to uphold the rights of all, especially the most vulnerable communities. A rights-based budget is not only fiscally sound but also socially just and sustainable.

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Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

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