



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

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**SUHAKAM URGES RIGHTS-BASED RESPONSE AMID ECONOMIC PRESSURES
AND PROPOSED CUTS TO HEALTH AND EDUCATION**

KUALA LUMPUR (1 MAY 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) expresses deep concern over the compounding impact of current economic challenges on vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and low-income communities, including undocumented, stateless persons, and refugees in light of recent reports indicating proposed reductions in public expenditure for critical sectors.

Recent developments indicate that the Treasury of Malaysia has proposed RM5.4 billion in budget cuts affecting the health and higher education ministries. The proposed reductions to the Ministry of Health, is of course most worrying as it comes at a time when demand for public healthcare, nutrition support, and essential social services is increasing, particularly, among those most affected by the rising cost of living.

SUHAKAM stresses that fiscal retrenchment in healthcare during periods of economic pressure is particularly concerning. Evidence globally shows that healthcare systems are often among the hardest hit during crises, with long-term consequences for public health outcomes. In Malaysia, such reductions risk further exacerbating existing gaps in access, quality, and equity in healthcare services

SUHAKAM is concerned that such reductions, if implemented without adequate safeguards, risk undermining access to essential services that are critical to the protection of human rights, particularly in the areas of women's health, child development, and the well-being of other vulnerable and marginalised groups, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income households. Economic hardship places added strain on households and may lead to adverse health outcomes, including reduced access to nutritious food, delayed healthcare seeking, and worsening physical and mental health conditions.

SUHAKAM further emphasises that such measures may constitute a **regressive step** in the realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights. Malaysia has voluntarily committed to Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. In particular, Target 3(c) calls for increased health financing and strengthened health workforce capacity. SUHAKAM notes that both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy have identified SDG 3 as a national priority due to its significant social impact. These commitments must be meaningfully upheld. The Government must not regress on the public right to health, a core economic, social and cultural human right. Public right to health is also a constitutional right protected by the Federal Constitution. Any fiscal consolidation measures must be carefully calibrated to avoid undermining equitable access to healthcare and essential support systems.



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SUHAKAM reiterates that the right to health, adequate food, and well-being are fundamental human rights, protected by the Federal Constitution, as well as reflected in international obligations including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

In this regard, SUHAKAM calls on the Government to:

- i. Ensure that any fiscal consolidation measures do not disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, particularly, the elderly, women, children, and low-income groups;
- ii. Safeguard and, where necessary, increase allocations for essential health services, in line with SDG commitments, including maternal and reproductive health, child nutrition, and mental health support;
- iii. Strengthen community-based health and social support systems, particularly for underserved and at-risk populations;
- iv. Expand targeted social assistance, including food and nutrition support for low-income families;
- v. Adopt a human rights-based approach to budgeting, ensuring transparency, participation, and accountability in fiscal decision-making.

SUHAKAM stresses that policy responses to economic pressures must not come at the expense of the most vulnerable. Commitments to sustainable development and human rights must be matched by concrete policy choices. Malaysia must not only prioritise SDG 3 in principle but also reflect this priority in practice. The Commission remains committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that Malaysia's development policies uphold human dignity and leave no one behind.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
1 May 2026**