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SUHAKAM CALLS FOR RIGHTS-BASED BUDGET 2027 THAT INVESTS IN PEOPLE, LIVELIHOODS AND STRONGER INSTITUTIONS

KUALA LUMPUR (9 OCTOBER 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) emphasises that Budget 2027 must go beyond economic growth and fiscal priorities to address the everyday needs, rights and well-being of people across Malaysia. A national budget is more than a financial plan. It reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that development benefits everyone, particularly those most vulnerable to economic and social inequalities.

Every parent should be able to send their child to school knowing that the child will be safe. Every worker, including gig workers, should be able to earn a decent living without exploitation and with adequate social protection. Farmers and small-scale food producers should be supported in sustaining their livelihoods while ensuring access to affordable, safe and nutritious food. These are everyday human rights concerns that should guide public spending towards greater equality, fairness and accountability.

SUHAKAM recognises the Government's responsibility to balance competing fiscal priorities. However, insufficient investment in essential services and preventive measures can deepen inequalities and place greater pressure on public institutions. Budget 2027 should therefore prioritise access to quality healthcare, education, affordable housing and social protection, particularly for low-income households, persons with disabilities, older persons, women, children and rural communities. In line with Malaysia's commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), SUHAKAM calls for disability-inclusive and gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that public resources address existing inequalities, remove barriers to essential services and promote equal opportunities for women, girls and persons with disabilities.

The safety and well-being of children must remain a national priority. Through its Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), SUHAKAM has repeatedly raised concerns about bullying, violence and inadequate safeguards in schools. These concerns demonstrate the need for sustained investment in school safety, effective reporting mechanisms, psychosocial support and institutional accountability to ensure that every child can learn in a safe and supportive environment.

Economic development must also protect workers' rights and sustainable livelihoods. Particular attention should be given to gig workers and those in informal employment who face income insecurity, limited social protection and occupational risks. Equally important is supporting farmers, smallholders, fishers and rural communities facing rising costs, environmental degradation and climate-related challenges. Budget 2027 should strengthen food security, sustainable agriculture and responsible management of natural resources, while safeguarding the environment and the rights of affected communities, including Indigenous Peoples.

Strong and independent institutions are essential to ensuring that national policies translate into meaningful improvements in people's lives. As Malaysia's national human rights institution, SUHAKAM plays a vital role in advising the Government, examining complaints, conducting inquiries and monitoring, promoting human rights awareness and recommending institutional reforms. However, SUHAKAM continues to face serious financial constraints, with nearly 90 per cent of its annual budget committed to emoluments and essential operating expenditure, leaving limited resources for programmes and activities. These constraints have restricted the Commission's ability to expand investigations, monitoring and human rights education, while plans to establish regional offices to improve public access to its services remain unrealised. This is particularly

concerning as SUHAKAM's responsibilities continue to expand, including through the strengthened mandate of the OCC.

SUHAKAM emphasises that Section 19(1) of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act 1999 [Act 597] imposes a clear legal obligation on the Government to provide adequate annual funding to enable the Commission to discharge its functions effectively. This is not a matter of discretion or goodwill, but a statutory responsibility that must be fulfilled. The Paris Principles further reinforce the importance of adequate financial resources in safeguarding the independence and effectiveness of national human rights institutions. SUHAKAM therefore urges the Government to fulfil this obligation through Budget 2027 and ensure that financial constraints do not continue to limit the Commission's ability to carry out its mandate. **Investing in SUHAKAM is an investment in the protection of human rights, stronger public institutions, accountability and Malaysia's international credibility.**

SUHAKAM calls on the Government to ensure that Budget 2027 reflects a genuine commitment to human rights-based development. Ultimately, its success should be measured not only by economic indicators, but also by how effectively public resources reduce inequalities, protect livelihoods, improve quality of life and reach those who need them most.

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Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
9 October 2026