



PENGURUSAN PEMANTAUAN KERATAN AKHBAR MBSJ
TARIKH: 20 FEBRUARI 2024 (SELASA)

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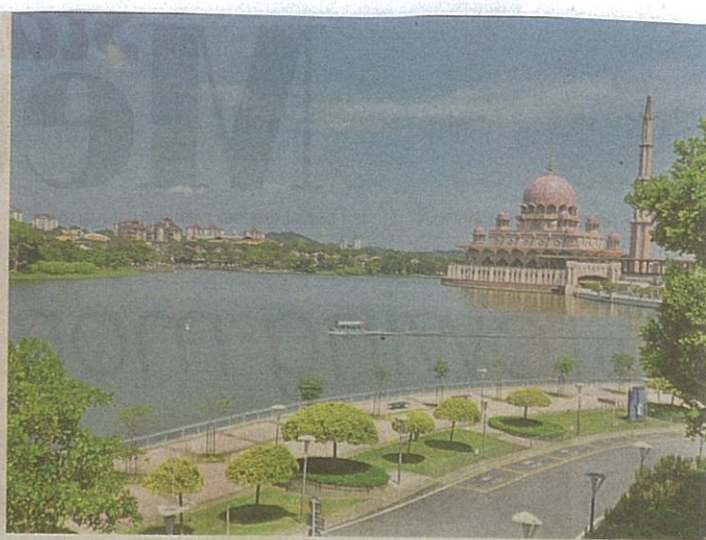
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Parks and open fields or green spaces can act like sponges to absorb rainwater.



Putrajaya has plenty of water bodies or blue spaces, which should help prevent flooding.

By SHEILA SRI PRIYA
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THE term "sponge cities" is used to describe urban areas with abundant trees, lakes and parks designed to absorb rain and prevent flooding.

During the Selangor State Assembly sitting in November, Kota Kemuning assemblyman Preakas Sampunathan said the "sponge city" concept could address flooding.

He said the focus should be on prevention rather than corrective measures to deal with floods.

"We need surfaces that can absorb water and release it slowly.

"At the moment, we are big on building retention ponds but we need diverse ways to solve floods," he said.

StarMetro spoke to experts to determine what sustainable methods could be used to mitigate flooding in the city.

Think City managing director Hamdan Abdul Majeed said nature-based solutions were increasingly being recognised as potential strategies for flood mitigation.

"Traditional flood defences like flood walls and being dependent on drainage systems (also known as grey infrastructure) may no longer be sufficient to address increasing climate threats.

"The nature-based solution is a climate-adaptation approach that leverages nature and functional ecosystems as integral infrastructure.

"It provides evidence-based solutions for both societal and environmental challenges.

More green, blue spaces needed to prevent flooding

Nature-based solutions as preventive measures in urban areas should be explored further, say experts



Preakas: Focus should be on prevention, rather than corrective measures in dealing with floods.



Hamdan: Traditional flood defences may no longer be sufficient to address increasing climate threats.



Mustapha: Maintenance of drains is critical to flood prevention, otherwise there will be back flow.



Melasutra: Invest in mitigation projects to reduce impact on those living in flood-prone areas.

"The concept of sponge cities has been identified as a key example of nature-based solutions for urban areas.

"It is capable of minimising the impact of natural disasters, especially in urban settings with prominent water elements.

"Sponge cities have large expanses of natural areas, including green spaces and water bodies also known as blue spaces, which aim to absorb rain and prevent flooding," said Hamdan.

He explained that the concept mimicked the natural hydrological cycle to help reduce the impact of flooding.

A sponge city essentially soaks in rainwater and retains excess stormwater, then filters and releases the water slowly, much like a sponge.

"It relies on a natural stormwater management infrastructure, with a focus on flood control and mitigating urban development's impacts on hydrology

and ecosystems.

"This includes the use of permeable materials, construction of new retention ponds and restoration of wetlands, which would not only ease waterlogging, but also improve the urban environment.

"The availability of green and blue spaces serves as an asset that should be utilised in a high-density city.

"Through the sponge cities approach, we expect to significantly

reduce damage to property and infrastructure, reduce economic losses and enhance community resilience.

"It is not only capable of dealing with a sudden excess of stormwater but also reuses it to help mitigate the impact of extreme heat," he added.

Think City developed the Penang Nature-based Climate Adaptation Programme for the island (PNBCAP), touted as the first of its kind in Malaysia.

THE STAR
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The ponds in Putrajaya are able to retain excess rainwater during a downpour. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/ The Star

PNBCAP components include urban greening, stormwater management, fostering social and community resilience, and strengthening institutional capacity, Hamdan explained.

"The programme is a pilot initiative that will serve as a municipal framework for climate adaptation, with the potential for it to be adopted in other cities in Malaysia and elsewhere in the region," he said.

Better way to manage water

According to Housing and Urban Futurist Resilient City consultant Mustapha Kamal Zulkarnain, Malaysia has an abundance of spaces that are not gazetted.

He said that after a 2005 flood, the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) came up with the Comprehensive Master Plan for Eco-Friendly Drainage or *Pelan Induk Saliran Mesra Alam* where the drainage system used the swale method (see sidebar).

Mustapha said such plans were

typically designed for sustainable water management and urban development, factoring in environmental conservation and minimising negative impacts on ecosystems.

"Our drains are made of earth and they act like a sponge, whereby some rainwater is absorbed instead of being flushed away.

"Drains in newer housing developments such as Denai Alam, Shah Alam, are made using the swale method.

"Playgrounds and fields are also great for water retention during a downpour," he said.

The maintenance of drains are, however, critical in this system.

Without good maintenance, any drain, whether earth swale or concrete-lined ones will back flow, noted Mustapha, citing the confluence of Gombak and Klang rivers as regularly experiencing this problem.

Referring to the Denai Alam flooding in November 2022, he said it occurred once after 15 years and he attributed it to poor

maintenance of drains.

"I was living there. I saw the drain water level rising but only to the brim. It didn't flood roads or houses," he said.

Mustapha said most local councils required developers to allocate 10% of their development for open space.

"Of that 10%, some 30% of it should be open space that can act as a retention pond.

"The developer may meet the open-space criteria with smaller scattered portions, which will be less impactful," he noted.

He said that due to the scarcity of land, there was a need for SMART (surveillance, monitoring, analysis, rethinking, thoughtfulness) planning.

Mustapha said there was no need for new guidelines, but use innovative approaches instead.

"Use existing parks to dissipate the rainwater," he said.

Kuala Lumpur Residents Action for Sustainable Development (KLRA+SD) chairman Tan Booi Charn said any plan to mitigate flooding would

be welcomed.

"Under the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan, experts also spoke about flood mitigation and making the drainage system more efficient," said Tan.

She observed that floodwater was often muddy and that where the soil originated from should be investigated.

Underground water storage

The more concrete a city has, the less water can be absorbed by the ground.

As more green spaces are developed into grey areas (buildings and other concrete developments), people will face problems such as flooding, said Assoc Prof Dr Melasutra Md Dali from Universiti Malaya's Built Environment Faculty.

"Since 2013, China and some Western countries have been working on solving issues related to climate change.

"We are not spared from climate change issues as we now have heavy rain in January and

this affects places in Johor," she pointed out.

"When the sea level is higher than rivers, there will be stagnant flooding," she said.

Melasutra said that in China, water tanks were created underground to store excess rainwater from a downpour.

"Putrajaya has natural ponds and these will retain rain during a downpour.

"We need a holistic system that is comprehensive and interconnected – most developments only focus on using up the land."

She said that for flood mitigation, underground water storage ideas would be the way forward and the stored water could be used during the dry season.

"We need to look at long-term investments with high returns.

"To mitigate traffic congestion, the LRT and MRT were built. They are expensive but impactful in the long run.

"Similarly we should invest in flood mitigation projects to reduce the impact on those living in flood-prone areas," she added.

THE STAR

Tarikh: 2.0 FEB 2024

Ministry raises quota for solar panel schemes



Akmal says the government welcomes renewable energy initiatives by industries.

THE installation of solar panels in residential areas nationwide is rising, says Deputy Energy Transition and Water Transformation Minister Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir.

He said this positive trend had prompted the government to increase the quota for homeowners to instal solar panels this year through the Net Energy Metering (NEM) Programme.

He said this after launching the solar scheme at a hotel in Sepang, Selangor, reported Bernama.

Deputy Prime Minister

Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof had previously stated that the NEM programme would continue with an additional quota offer of 100MW for NEM Rakyat and 300MW for NEM Nova (Net Offset Virtual Aggregation) as part of the Integrated Clean Energy programme.

Fadillah, who is Energy Transition and Water Transformation Minister, said the applications would be accepted until December or until the quota was fully allocated, whichever comes first.

Applications can be made

through the NEM system on the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (Seda) website www.seda.gov.my

The NEM programme will enable at least 25,000 domestic electricity consumers and 100 users in commercial and industrial categories to utilise their roofs for electricity generation through the installation of photovoltaic solar systems.

Akmal said the government welcomed initiatives to ensure the use of renewable energy in their premises by industries.

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In areas like Setia Alam in Shah Alam, earth swale drains create surface channels to direct and slow down the movement of water, allowing it to be absorbed by the soil.

Natural methods to control water flow

THERE are a number of nature-based solutions used for retaining or diverting surface runoff, especially during a downpour.

One of them is "earth swale", which refers to a landscaping technique used for water management and conservation, said Housing and Urban Futurist Resilient City consultant Mustapha Kamal Zulkarnain.

"A swale is a shallow, often gently sloping and vegetated channel designed to manage and control the flow of water.

"The earth swale method involves creating these channels on land surface to effectively

direct and slow down the movement of water, allowing it to be absorbed by the soil rather than having it quickly run off."

Earth swales are commonly used in sustainable landscaping to manage water in an eco-friendly way, preventing water wastage and promoting healthy soil and vegetation.

They can be implemented in various environments, from residential landscapes to agricultural or natural areas as well as urban developments.

Another technique is bioswale.

"Bioswales are parts of sus-

tainable green infrastructure that can manage stormwater runoff by filtering pollutants and replenishing groundwater, said Universiti Malaya Associate Professor Dr Melasutra Md Dali.

She said vegetation and soil were used to slow, filter and absorb rainwater, reducing the strain on traditional drainage systems and helping to mitigate flooding and soil erosion.

The integration of bioswales into urban landscapes promotes environmental sustainability and enhances community resilience to climate-change impacts, Melasutra said.

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By MEGAT SYAHAR
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BEGGARS and the homeless are an increasingly common sight in the heart of Kuala Lumpur and it has become a cause for concern.

An office worker who only wanted to be known as Lisa, 29, said she would typically see three to four beggars in the vicinity of a popular mall along Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman (TAR) on weekdays.

"Some of them sit at the entrance to the mall.

"This does not give a good impression, especially since this is a popular area with tourists," said Lisa.

When *StarMetro* visited the area during the day recently, a woman was spotted begging on the pedestrian walkway.

The 78-year-old, who identified herself as Fauziah, said she had to beg as she was unable to find work.

Most employers did not want to take a chance on her, said the woman from Kelantan.

As someone who has no children or spouse, she has no other means of supporting herself other than begging, she said.

"I have siblings, but they have their own families and I do not want to burden them.

"Usually, I can get around RM40 to RM50 in a day," Fauziah said, adding that she was renting a room nearby.

Another beggar who wanted to be known as Watie, 33, said she would also get around RM40 to RM50 in a day.

"I have two children at home and sometimes, there is no one to look after the younger one, who is only six years old.

"We would ride the bus to the mall and hope we get enough (from begging) to buy necessities.

"My children go to a *tahfiz* school as it is free and if there are fees, I would not be

More beggars sighted in centre of Kuala Lumpur

Vagrants, homeless marring city's image among visitors to these areas



People pictured sitting or lying down at the five-foot-way along Jalan Raja Laut in Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur. — Photos: CHAN TAK KONG and WILLIAM GARY/The Star

required to pay a lump sum," she said.

Other popular spots for beggars in the city include Bukit Bintang, Jalan Masjid India and Chow Kit.

Homeless people were also spotted in the area around a wholesale mall in Pudu.

When contacted, a Kuala

Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) spokesperson said beggars were not under its purview.

"They fall under the Welfare Department's (JKM) jurisdiction. And if a crime is committed, the case will go to the police."

JKM could not be reached for comments at press time.



Beggars spotted along the walkway of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, near the entrance to a mall

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State funds help freshen up playground, courts at SS1 park in PJ



Lim (left) and Ong inspecting the upgraded playground at the park in Jalan SS1/21. (Right) The basketball court was refurbished under Projek Selangor Penyayang. — Photos: ART CHEN/The Star

By **JADE CHAN**
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RESIDENTS can now enjoy a newly refurbished park in Jalan SS1/21, Petaling Jaya.

The park underwent concurrent upgrades from two government agencies at a cost of RM169,553.

"The basketball and sepak

takraw courts were refurbished under Selangor government's Projek Selangor Penyayang (PSP) for RM84,484," said Kampung Tunku assemblyman Lim Yi Wei.

"At the same time, Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) upgraded and repaired the playground area at a cost of RM85,069," she said.

Works started in August last year and were completed last month.

"The upgrades to the playground addressed residents' complaints," said MBPJ Zone 20 councillor Ong Yew Thai.

"The works carried out included installing a new playground rubber mat, slide, benches and picnic table."

Lim said PSP was an initiative by the state government for infrastructure upgrade and construction of public facilities, with each constituency receiving RM500,000 last year.

"While the details of this year's PSP have not been outlined, each assemblyman uses 30% of their allocation for

small projects.

"I am in the midst of consulting with stakeholders in my constituency, including schools and places of worship, to check if they need infrastructure upgrades," said Lim.

She added that next month would be the submission deadline for small projects.

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Tarikh: 20 FEB 2024

Govt should act against unhygienic food operators, urge groups

PETALING JAYA: With the spike in food poisoning incidents, consumers should report against food operators if they are not satisfied with the hygiene standards, say consumer and health groups.

A WhatsApp hotline should be set up by the Health Ministry so that people can instantly report cases of food safety and poisoning, suggested National Consumer Complaints Centre senior manager Saral James Maniam.

"It could be similar to the WhatsApp number where the public can report those who smoke in public places that have been declared no-smoking zones.

"This will enable quick action to be taken against eateries with unsanitary practices or conditions," she added.

"We received more than double the number of complaints about food safety, poisoning and cleanliness.

"From 11 cases in 2022, it went up to 27 last year," Saral said, adding that the actual numbers were bigger as many cases of food poisoning often go unreported.

"The increase in complaints we received could be due to more consumers being aware of their rights and wanting to seek compensation for their plight," she said.

Consumers Association of Penang research officer Hatijah Hashim called on consumers to raise their standards and stop giving business to places with poor hygiene standards.

"This is one of the most effective ways we can pressure food sellers to buck up on their practices," she said.

According to data from the Health Ministry, food poisoning rates are on the rise.

Last year, the rate was at 51 incidents for every 100,000 people in Malaysia – more than double the rate of 18.4 incidents in 2021.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said in certain cases, food poisoning can be serious or even life-threatening.

"In some severe cases, it can even lead to meningitis, kidney damage, Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (a disease that affects the kidneys and blood clotting functions), arthritis as well as brain and nerve damage," Dr Azizan said.

She advised people to seek immediate medical attention if symptoms of food poisoning like diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain or fever were severe.

"Do not delay seeing a doctor if you have blood in the stool or high fever at 38°C and above.

"Other serious symptoms are feeling dehydrated like having a dry mouth and throat, significantly reduced urination frequency, or feeling dizzy when standing up," she said.

Govt aims to address mental health in workplaces

By BENJAMIN LEE
and HO JIA WEN
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KUALA LUMPUR: With mental health issues expected to continue to plague workplaces, 10,000 workers will be trained under the government's new Occupational Mental Health First Aid (OMHFA) programme to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills to help counter the problem.

Developed by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the first batch of participants will be provided free training by the body at a cost of RM12mil this year.

Human Resources Minister Steven Sim said the three-day programme will provide workers with much-needed access to mental health awareness and occupational psychological training.

He said the new programme



Safety first: NIOSH participants in full gear demonstrating their safety skills at the conference here yesterday. — Bernama

will address this issue, adding that it will be key in enabling workers to provide early intervention for colleagues facing mental health issues.

"With this, we hope to educate

not just workers but also employers and the public as a whole that it is okay to seek help, especially when it comes to mental health issues.

"The World Health Organisation

has predicted mental illness to replace cardiovascular disease as the top factor for a person to decide whether to continue working or otherwise," Sim said in his speech at the 24th Conference and Exhibition on Occupational Safety and Health (Cosh 2024) held here yesterday.

Sim said the stigma against mental health openness had resulted in heavy under-reporting of cases at workplaces.

He said that under the National Occupational Accident and Disease Statistics 2022, only one psycho-social case was reported compared to other causes such as hearing loss, which made up over 5,000 cases, and explained why:

"It is not because there are no mental illness cases; instead it shows a lack of awareness and acceptance towards mental health and the possible solutions."

Sim said after the first 10,000

complete the training, the cost for others wanting to participate could be listed as levy claims under the Human Resource Development Corp (HRD Corp) programme.

Cosh 2024, held in conjunction with the Scientific Conference on Occupational Safety and Health (SciCosh 2024), features over 60 exhibitors from across various industries showcasing the latest in safety technology and practices for workplaces.

The conference is expected to draw in over 3,000 visitors and experts from various sectors for its two-day event which ends today.



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Tarikh:

Lax practices, loose bowels

Food poisoning incidents rising after drop during pandemic

By YUEN MEIKENG
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysians love to eat, so this may be tough to swallow: food poisoning cases are back with a vengeance after seeing a big drop during the first two years of the pandemic.

Cases are now more common, with 51 incidents recorded for every 100,000 people in Malaysia last year – more than double the rate of 18.4 incidents in 2021.

The observation was based on data from the Health Ministry made available to *The Star*.

The food poisoning incidence rates took a dive in 2020 and 2021, when the movement control order (MCO) was in place to curb the spread of Covid-19.

From 28.9 incidents per 100,000 population in 2020, the number fell to 18.4 in 2021.

The MCO, which began on March 18, 2020, was lifted in stages up to early January 2022.

When contacted, the Health Ministry said the spike in food poisoning cases coincided with the lifting of the MCO.

Top factors that led to food poi-



soning incidents were cross-contamination and improper thawing and cooking practices, based on its investigations.

“Cross-contamination (bacteria transferring from one substance to another) is caused by poor or inadequate food-handling practices from food handlers.

“We urge all to have proper food-handling practices like washing hands, separating raw and ready-to-eat foods, and maintaining clean and sanitised utensils and surfaces,” the ministry said.

At the state level, Labuan topped the list with the highest incidence rate of food poisoning as of 2022, according to the

Compendium of Environment Statistics by the Statistics Department.

The federal territory recorded 105.4 cases for every 100,000 population, followed by Terengganu with 84.9 cases and Melaka with 79.5 incidents.

Last December, it was reported that a 54-year-old woman had died of suspected food poisoning.

She reportedly suffered symptoms of food poisoning from eating a sandwich she bought at the Perasing rest and recreation area in Kemaman, Terengganu.

Commenting on the case, the ministry said the Kemaman District Health Office has investigated the premises involved, with food samples, swabs of equipment and food handlers having been analysed.

“Laboratory results show that there were violations under the Food Act 1983 and the Food Regulations 1985.

“Legal action is being taken against the food operators involved,” the ministry said.

To tackle the rising food poisoning cases, the ministry said it was conducting regular checks and

enforcement on food premises, while educating consumers through social media on how to prevent food poisoning.

It said all employers must hire food handlers who have undergone Food Handler Training and have been medically examined and vaccinated, under Regulation 11 of the Food Hygiene Regulation 2009.

“The failure of the employer to do so and the failure of the food operator to comply with all these requirements is an offence, which can be punished with a fine of up to RM10,000 or jail time of up to two years,” it said.

Currently, the ministry has a platform for the public to lodge complaints on unhygienic food premises through its public complaints management system or Sistem Pengurusan Aduan Awam at moh.spab.gov.my.

“This complaint platform allows users to report incidents by providing detailed information about food premises.

“Such information is crucial for the authorities to conduct thorough investigations and take appropriate action,” it added.

Call to extend Padu registration **deadline**

2/2/24
sun

➤ Move would facilitate participation of non-tech savvy elderly population, says group

■ BY **SIVANISVARRY MORHAN**
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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Coalition on Ageing, an NGO that advocates the well-being of the elderly, has urged the government to extend the March 31 closing date for Central Database Hub (Padu) registration.

Its chairman Cheah Tuck Wing said senior citizens would not be able to register before the deadline as many would not have assistance to navigate the process.

"Registration for Padu remains accessible until March 31, allowing users to verify and amend 39 personal particulars, including identification numbers, household composition and addresses.

"However, the government must recognise that those in need, including senior citizens, persons with disabilities and those in rural areas are struggling to register."

Cheah said when implementing such systems, it is crucial to consider its accessibility and usability for all demographics, particularly senior citizens who are usually overwhelmed by

digital platforms.

"There were technical issues and complaints about Padu when it was launched, leading to a reluctance to sign up among the people."

Cheah also said senior citizens are the main target of scammers due to their vulnerability and if they are not careful, they may click on unknown links and later find themselves in trouble.

He said it is important for the government to recognise and work with accredited civil society groups and organise public-private partnerships to get vulnerable members of society and rural folk to register.

Due to the prevalence of opportunists in the digital sphere, he also advised individuals who are uncertain about the legitimacy of Padu links to refrain from clicking on them.

"The government can implement strategies such as deploying mobile registration units to rural areas, providing assistance and offering support services at kiosks and community centres."

He added that by actively recognising and addressing the specific needs of these

vulnerable communities, the government could ensure aid and subsidies reach those who need them most.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research senior research fellow Dr Azmi Hassan said ensuring the public is registered is crucial for the government to efficiently allocate aid and subsidies to targeted groups that might have been previously overlooked.

He agreed with Cheah on extension of the deadline and called for registration to be perpetually open to public access as it would allow individuals the flexibility to update their information whenever required.

"The needs of users can vary widely, and a rigid deadline may not suit everyone. So, allowing for real-time updates would minimise the risk of outdated or incorrect information.

"Keeping the system open could cater to the diverse preferences and schedules of users, and ensure maximum participation and engagement."

Azmi also said an open and accessible database system would send a clear message of transparency and accountability, which demonstrates the government's commitment to serving public interests.

"The government could also gain the trust and confidence of the public, particularly considering its role in collecting, storing and using personal information," he said.

THE SUN
Tukohi 20 FEB 2024

National Cancer Society backs smoking-area plan ^{ms}

KUALA LUMPUR: The National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM) has backed the Health Ministry's plan to allow designated smoking areas to be set up near eateries located in tight spaces.

"This plan is a good progression of a wider move to create more smoke-free areas in public locations, and should be support-

ed," said NCSM managing director Associate Professor Dr Murallitharan M. in a statement.

He said there was confusion between the terms "smoke-free premises" and "smoke-free areas", which were often used interchangeably.

"Smoke-free premises" refers to establishments where no

smoking is allowed.

"For eating establishments, in particular, this extends not only to the specific establishment but also within a 3m radius of the establishment. Outside this 3m radius, people can smoke," said Dr Murallitharan.

"Smoke-free area" refer to an area gazetted under the law

where smoking is prohibited, such as parks and attractions like Jonker Walk in Melaka.

Murallitharan said the Health Ministry's proposal involved allowing designated smoking areas that were not within smoke-free areas, but in places with smoke-free premises.

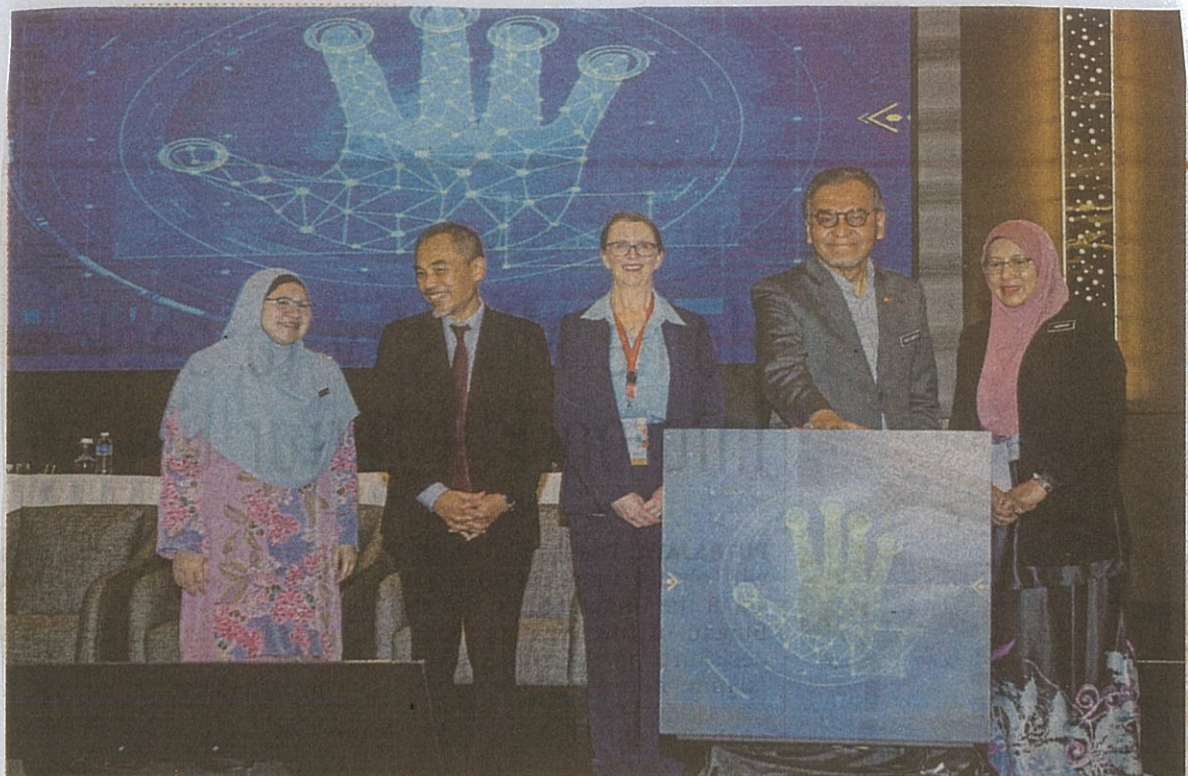
He said the benefit of this plan

was that there was assurance that there would be no changes to smoke-free areas, which will remain off-limits to smokers.

"Over the long run, spaces with smoke-free premises will be transformed into smoke-free areas as more and more people stop using even these designated smoking areas."

NEW STRAITS TIMES

Tarikh: 20 Feb 2004



Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (second from right) launching the 28th Codex Committee for Fats and Oils meeting in Kuala Lumpur, yesterday. With him are (from left) National Institute of Health Deputy Director-General (Research & Technical Support) Datuk Dr Nor Fariza Ngah, Health Director-General Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan, Codex secretary Dr Sarah Cahill and Health Ministry Food Safety and Quality Division senior director Norrani Eksan. PIC BY AZIAH AZMEE

BEST SOLUTION SOUGHT

'ALL VIEWS ON SMOKING ZONES WILL BE STUDIED'

Health minister says proposal came after meeting with 30 premises owners and traders in Jalan Alor, KL

MUHAMMAD YUSRI MUZAMIR
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THE Health Ministry is willing to listen to all views regarding the issue of designated smoking zones, including at eateries, said Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad yesterday.

This will help the government get with the best solution for everyone before it is taken to the cabinet.

"(The suggestion to allow certain eateries to have designated smoking areas) was just our view-

point after hearing recommendations from 30 owners of premises and traders in Jalan Alor.

"However, if it is rejected, then we will listen and look at the practical aspect of it.

"We will not make any U-turns (on smoking ban in eateries)."

Dr Dzulkefly said this after launching the 28th Codex Committee for Fats and Oils meeting.

It was reported that the ministry was considering allowing designated smoking areas near eateries located in "tight spaces".

This was because it was hard for smokers to find spots to smoke, as under the law that

came into force on Jan 1, 2020, they must be at least 3m from an eatery.

Failure to adhere to the ruling would see offenders fined up to RM10,000 or jailed up to two years.

Detailing the reasoning for the proposal for designated smoking areas, Dr Dzulkefly said it was for better enforcement of anti-smoking laws.

"In Jalan Alor, I saw that it was almost impossible to enforce the 3m no-smoking zone.

"So we are considering designated smoking areas for a certain number of hours and with strict conditions attached."

While the idea earned mixed reactions from food outlet operators, health experts decried the ministry's suggestion, saying that it would send the wrong message to the public.

Wrong smoke signal

How to encourage smoking

2/24

MALAYSIANS' hope of seeing smoke-free restaurants and eateries may be going up in smoke. And so may be the dream of a smoke-free Malaysia. The Health Ministry is considering giving smokers more space. To be fair, the move is merely at an idea stage. The ministry wants to listen to everyone. But still it is a threatening idea to non-smokers. Experts interviewed by this newspaper say the idea is a sign of a "U-turn". We won't go that far, but the idea of creating more space for smokers in public areas does send a wrong signal to smokers, some of whom would have quit smoking but for the announcement on Saturday. What is worse, non-smokers may even be encouraged to take up smoking as Malaysia becomes smoker-friendly again. We laud the government for wanting to hear everyone out, but what is good for smokers will never be good for non-smokers when it comes to public space. The latter know a smoke-free Malaysia is some distance away, but they want the government to take small but sure steps to get there.

Decades of hard work on getting people to quit smoking may be wasted if the government does decide to give more space to smokers. The Health Ministry should have visited restaurants and eateries around the country where smokers continue to puff away despite notices screaming of hefty fines. Lack of enforcement breeds impunity. The Health Ministry must know that smoking is not only dangerous to smokers, but also to non-smokers. What is more, the public health bill of smoking-related illnesses is a growing annual headache for the Treasury. With the exception of secondary smokers, smokers bring the diseases onto themselves. They have chosen to smoke and, as such, they must pay the price. The Health Ministry must find a way to make them pay for it, not appease their bad habit by making the non-smokers pay.

As for choice, the Health Ministry seems to be fearful of trampling on the constitutional rights of smokers. This was one of the reasons why an end was put to the tobacco generational endgame. We say this fear is unwarranted. And legally misplaced, too. Two reasons will do. One, the Federal Constitution has no such express provision. Such a right must be argued. There is no precedent for such an argument. Two, even if we grant the argument, it can be argued away by a stronger counter-argument. There are 34 million people in Malaysia, of whom only 4.9 million are smokers. If we want to grant the constitutional rights argument to smokers, then surely 29.1 million non-smokers have a greater right to be free from smoke. We are not saying that the majority will always win in the courts. There may be circumstances where the court will grant such a right. This is not one of them. The right must be beneficial, and not one as detrimental as smoking. It is indisputable that smoking is detrimental to the health of smokers. It is equally detrimental to the health of non-smokers. Finally, it is detrimental to the coffers of the government. The Treasury may be happy to receive billions in tax revenues from tobacco sales, but it loses twice that to just three smoking-related illnesses — lung cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Penny in, pound out never did any governments any good.

 **The right must be beneficial, and not one as detrimental as smoking.**

NEW STRAITS TIMES
Tarikh: 20 FEB 2024

Dividen KWSP 2023 dijangka lebih baik hingga 6.3 peratus

Oleh ZAKKINA WATI
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PETALING JAYA: Pakar ekonomi menjangkakan dividen Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) 2023 pada kadar 5.5 sehingga 6.3 peratus, lebih baik berbanding 2022.

Pada 2022, KWSP mengumumkan kadar dividen sebanyak 5.35 peratus bagi simpanan konvensional dan 4.75 peratus untuk simpanan syariah.

Pensyarah Kanan, Pusat Pengajian Ekonomi, Kewangan dan Perbankan, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Dr. Ahmad Hakimi Tajuddin menjangkakan dividen KWSP 2023 untuk simpanan syariah meningkat kepada 5.5 peratus, manakala simpanan konvensional 6.3 peratus.

Beliau berkata, jangkaan itu berasaskan aset KWSP yang terus berkembang, dengan aset di bawah pengurusan (AUM) dana pencen itu telah mencapai sebanyak RM1.1 trilion, disokong oleh prestasi suku tahunan yang lebih baik.

“Terdapat petunjuk positif dalam pendapatan pelaburan dan juga peningkatan jumlah ahli aktif yang mencatat rekod tertinggi.

“Pendapatan pelaburan bersih

untuk sembilan bulan pertama 2023 KWSP berjumlah RM47.86 bilion, dengan RM4.79 bilion keuntungan daripada pasaran sekuriti. Keuntungan ini juga dipengaruhi

oleh turun naik pertukaran asing. “Selain itu, peningkatan jumlah ahli aktif yang mencapai rekod tertinggi sebanyak 8.47 juta pada separuh pertama 2023 menun-

jukkan pemulihan ekonomi yang mantap, seiring dengan peningkatan peluang pekerjaan untuk rakyat Malaysia,” katanya kepada *Utusan Malaysia*.



KWSP dijangka mencatat pendapatan pelaburan asing yang lebih tinggi didorong oleh kadar tukaran wang asing terutama dolar Amerika Syarikat yang lebih tinggi berbanding ringgit. - GAMBAR HIASAN

Mengulas simpanan syariah, beliau berpandangan, jika simpanan syariah terus menawarkan pulangan yang lebih rendah, ia mungkin mempengaruhi minat pencarum yang mengutamakan keuntungan, untuk bertukar kerana simpanan berkenaan.

“Sebaliknya, KWSP dapat menawarkan pulangan yang kompetitif dalam pelaburan yang patuh syariah, ia pasti mendorong lebih ramai ahli untuk memilih simpanan itu.

“Ia selaras dengan tuntutan Maqasid Syariah yang menekankan kepada kemaslahatan dunia dan akhirat,” katanya.

Menurut beliau, KWSP dilaporkan dalam perancangan untuk mengasingkan sepenuhnya aset simpanan syariah daripada aset simpanan konvensional mulai 1 Januari 2024.

Langkah itu katanya, bertujuan memberikan fleksibiliti kepada simpanan syariah dalam pelaburan, dengan harapan dapat mengurangkan jurang kadar dividen antara pelaburan konvensional dan syariah.

“Pemisahan sepenuhnya simpanan syariah dijangka dapat mengoptimalkan pulangan dan merapatkan jurang dividen syariah kepada dividen konvensional,” jelasnya.

Kerajaan perlu kawal selia jualan vape

vm 10/2

KUALA LUMPUR: Kerajaan perlu memperketat pengawal seliaan sistem jualan rokok elektronik dan vape di negara ini termasuk memantau kandungan dalam cecair vape yang kini banyak disalah gunakan.

Bercakap kepada *Utusan Malaysia*, Pengarah Kempen Selangor Bebas Asap Rokok (SELBAR), Dr. Mohd. Afiq Mohd. Nor berkata, ini kerana kandungan cecair vape itu tidak terkandung dalam Akta Kawalan Produk Merokok Demi Kesihatan Awam 2023.

Kata beliau, kerajaan perlu ketatkan kawal selia sistem jualan vape ini sebab kita pun sudah ada undang-undang berkenaan perkara ini dan sekarang kita hanya perlu menunggu secara rasmi ia dikuatkuasakan.

"Pada saya ia perlu ada garis panduan yang tetap bagaimana mereka boleh menjual rokok vape ini, di mana lokasinya, kandungannya bahaya atau tidak.

"Paling penting, tiada pengiklanan secara bebas mengenai vape ini sama ada dalam talian atau sebaliknya.

"Sebab sekarang ini saya lihat, lori yang kita nampak seperti jual cendol, kini mereka sudah semakin *advance* untuk menjual vape dengan konsep yang sama, hanya di lori-lori sahaja. Ini perlu diperhatikan kembali," katanya ketika dihubungi, semalam.

Akta Kawalan Produk Merokok Demi Kesihatan Awam 2023 yang diluluskan Parlimen pada Disember lalu, menetapkan kawal selia menyeluruh dilaksanakan bagi pengeluaran semua produk merokok termasuk vape.

Akta itu bertujuan mengatasi kelompongan undang-undang susulan pengecualian cecair vape bernikotin daripada senarai bahan terkawal Akta Racun 1952, selain selari usaha kerajaan melaksanakan cukai ke atas penjualan cecair vape untuk rokok elektronik pada kadar 40 sen setiap mililiter (ml) mulai 1 April 2023.

Selasa lalu, Ahli Parlimen Tasek Gelugor, Datuk Wan Saiful Wan Jan, turut mendesak kerajaan memperkenalkan peraturan bagi mengawal selia kandungan vape.

UTUSAN MALAYSIA
Tarikh: 20 FEB 2024

Tiada cadangan pinda pencen wakil rakyat

20/2

KUALA LUMPUR: Parlimen belum menerima sebarang usul cadangan pindaan Akta Ahli Parlimen (Saraan) Akta 1980.

Yang Dipertua Dewan Rakyat, Tan Sri Johari Abdul berkata, Kabinet belum membuat keputusan berhubung perkara itu meskipun wujud gesaan agar pencen Ahli Parlimen dimansuhkan.

"Tiada keputusan soal pencen. Apa yang ada itu hanyalah pandangan pihak tertentu tetapi tiada (kajian saran ahli Parlimen) seperti kami dimaklumkan.

"Maksudnya kami tiada mendapat arahan atau perbincangan. Ini bermakna tidak berada di atas meja dalam bentuk rang undang-undang, kita anggap tidak berlaku apa-apa lagi," katanya dalam Perjumpaan Yang Dipertua Dewan Rakyat bersama Ketua Pengarang Media di Parlimen, semalam.

Sebelum ini, Perdana Menteri, Datuk Anwar Ibrahim berkata, cadangan memansuhkan pencen untuk pelantikan penjawat awam juga terpakai kepada ahli politik termasuk wakil rakyat.

Anwar secara prinsipnya bersetuju dengan cadangan tersebut, namun akan dimuktamad berdasarkan kajian yang diperoleh.

Sebelum ini, Kongres Kesatuan Pekerja-Pekerja Di Dalam Perkhidmatan Awam (Cuepacs) menggesa kerajaan mengkaji semula pemberian pencen kepada ahli-ahli politik membabitkan wakil rakyat jika negara berdepan kekangan kewangan.

Sementara itu, Johari berkata, mengesahkan tidak menerima usul undi tidak percaya kepada Perdana Menteri menjelang seminggu pembukaan Parlimen pada Isnin depan.

"Tiada surat, tiada emel, tiada panggilan telefon. Perkara ini tidak berlaku," katanya.

Mengulas tindakan Ahli Parlimen ponteng, Johari berkata, cadangan itu akan dibawa kepada Jawatankuasa Peraturan Mesyuarat untuk meneliti pandangan semua pihak.

Katanya, beliau yang sebelum ini menzahirkan cadangan secara tidak langsung telah mengundang pelbagai pandangan termasuk membantah tindakan tersebut.

UTUSAN MALAYSIA
Tarikh: 20 FEB 2024

Tangani segera masalah gelandangan

SH 10/2 (DBKL)

Elak imej Kuala Lumpur sebagai kota metropolitan moden tercalar

Oleh NORAFIZA JAAFAR
KUALA LUMPUR

Isu gelandangan di Kuala Lumpur harus ditangani segera kerana ia boleh mencemarkan imej ibu negara sebagai sebuah kota metropolitan moden, kata Ahli Lembaga Penasihat Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur, Lai Chen Heng.

Beliau berkata, semua masalah berbangkit memerlukan perancangan bersepadu melibatkan Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM), Baitulmal, Yayasan Kebajikan Negara (YKN), Imigresen dan Jabatan Pendaftaran Negara (JPN).

Menurutnya, walaupun berdepan misi sukar namun usaha membanteras isu gelandangan perlu ada dan tidak sekadar melepaskan batuk di tangga.

"Saya ingin Kuala Lumpur diingati sebagai sebuah ibu kota moden dan bukan ibu kota gelandangan."

"Apa yang pasti, isu gelandangan adalah satu realiti berlaku di depan mata kita. Walaupun tidak nampak serius tetapi boleh merebak ke kawasan lain jika tidak dibendung."

"Imej akan tercalar dan sukar dikembalikan sekiranya perkara ini tidak diatasi," katanya dalam satu kenyataan pada Isnin.



Gelandangan beratur bagi mendapatkan sumbangan perayaan baru-baru ini.

Beliau berkata demikian selepas meninjau kawasan sekitar Medan Pasar di sini bersama dua Ahli Lembaga Penasihat Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur lain iaitu Carmen Leong dan Dr Bashir baru-baru ini.

Katanya, tafsiran gelandangan mengikut Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat sebagai orang yang tiada ketentuan untuk tinggal dan biasanya menetap di jalanan.

Ujarnya, tinjauan mendapati kawasan tumpuan gelandangan tidak mempunyai tahap kebersihan yang baik.

"Bau busuk dan tidak menyenangkan meskipun kawasan tumpuan gelandangan ini terletak hanya 200 meter daripada lokasi pelancongan seperti Medan Tuanku, Masjid India, Jalan Hang

Lekiu dan Pasar Seni.

"Ini menyebabkan usaha DBKL untuk mengindahkan Kuala Lumpur juga terbantut apabila gejala gelandangan merosakkan harta benda awam, terutamanya mural dinding yang sepatutnya boleh menarik perhatian pengunjung," katanya.

Beliau tidak menafikan, banyak usaha dilakukan kerajaan untuk membantu golongan ini seperti bantuan bulanan JKM dan Baitulmal serta pusat perlindungan dan transit gelandangan namun mereka tetap memilih tinggal di jalanan.

Justeru beliau mahu membawa isu gelandangan ke peringkat Datuk Bandar Kuala Lumpur dan Kementerian berkaitan supaya ia dilihat dari perspektif pembangunan negara, tambahnya.

Jalan *glow in the dark* diperluas ke seluruh Selangor

SH 70/2

SHAH ALAM - Kerajaan negeri Selangor akan memperluaskan projek garisan bercahaya *glow in the dark* ke 15 lokasi di-kenal pasti membabitkan sembilan daerah.

Exco Infrastruktur dan Pertanian Selangor, Ir Izham Hashim berkata, keseluruhan projek me-rangkumi jarak 15 kilome-ter di Sepang, Kuala Langat, Sabak Bernam,

Gombak dan Petaling.

Menurutnya, projek membabitkan peruntukan RM900,000 bakal di-laksanakan dalam masa terdekat secara berfasa dengan menumpukan lo-kasi yang tidak mempunyai lampu jalan.

"Garis bercahaya ini membantu pemandu me-lihat jalan lebih jelas ter-utama pada cuaca gelap atau hujan.

"Diharap ia mampu meningkatkan tahap ke-selamatan dan memberi manfaat kepada peng-guna," katanya menerusi perkongsian di Facebook.

Terdahulu, Izham turut meninjau lokasi garisan jalan *glow in the dark* di Jalan Sungai Tekali dan Sungai Lalang.

Turut hadir Jurutera Awam Penguasa Jalan Jabatan Kerja Raya (JKR) Selangor, Asri Md Esa dan Jurutera Daerah Hulu Langat, Zamri Mohamud.

Beliau berkata, selain projek berkenaan, keraja-an negeri mempunyai pro-jek naik taraf jalan di ba-wah program Selangor Bercahaya yang kini mem-punyai 600 tiang lampu diod pemancar cahaya (LED).

"Untuk tahun ini, ke-rajaan negeri memper-untuk RM150 juta bagi penambahan lampu LED.

"Sama seperti pe-masangan lampu LED, kita juga akan minta maklumat pihak berkuasa tempatan (PBT) jika ada lagi kawa-san mereka yang me-merlukan garisan ber-cahaya ini," katanya.



Izham (kanan) ketika meninjau jalan *glow in the dark* di Sungai Lalang baru-baru ini.

SINAR HARIAN

Tarikh: 20 FEB 2024.....

Pertumbuhan ekonomi Malaysia masih dianggap baik



Permintaan domestik kukuh mantapkan prestasi berbanding sebahagian negara

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Pertumbuhan ekonomi negara 3.7 peratus yang dicatatkan pada 2023 meskipun tidak mencapai sasaran masih dianggap baik disokong permintaan domestik yang kukuh walaupun berdepan persekitaran luaran yang mencabar, kata penganalisis.

Pertumbuhan menyederhana itu berikutan penguncupan permintaan luaran yang berterusan dan lebih mendadak, manakala pertumbuhan yang mampan disokong oleh permintaan dalam negeri yang kukuh.

Permintaan domestik berkembang lebih cepat 6.2 peratus pada suku keempat 2023 berbanding 5.1 peratus pada suku ketiga 2023, terutama disebabkan perbelanjaan pelaburan lebih kukuh.

Penggunaan swasta kekal mengembang, walaupun sederhana sedikit kepada 4.2 peratus pada suku itu, disokong keadaan pasaran pekerjaan yang kukuh dan inflasi yang menyederhana.

Pada peringkat serantau, ekonomi Singapura mencatatkan pertumbuhan lebih rendah iaitu 1.1 peratus bagi 2023 berbanding jangkaan awal 1.2 peratus.

Penganalisis Ekonomi UniKL Business School, Prof Madya Dr Aimi Zulhazmi Abdul Rashid, berkata prestasi menyederhana yang dicatatkan ekonomi Malaysia tahun lalu adalah seperti dijangkakan, terutama sektor pembuatan yang telah mencatatkan penurunan.

Beliau berkata, beberapa negara maju juga berdepan kemelesetan teknikal ekonomi seperti di United Kingdom (UK) dan Jepun.

Katanya, ekonomi global dijangka malap pada 2024 berikutan keputusan Rizab Persekutuan (Fed) Amerika Syarikat (AS) mengekalkan kadar faedahnya 5.25 hingga 5.5 peratus untuk waktu lebih lama daripada jangkaan, menyebabkan bank pusat seluruh dunia mengekalkan kadar faedah yang tinggi.

"Justeru, keadaan itu menye-

babkan perdagangan dunia juga perlahan berikutan kos pembiayaan yang masih tinggi," katanya kepada BH.

Ancaman ekonomi global

Beliau menambah, krisis geopolitik yang berterusan di Asia Barat dan Eropah Timur dan berpotensi merebak ke kawasan lebih luas, memberikan ancaman kepada ekonomi dunia, terutama peningkatan kadar inflasi yang berpotensi meningkat semula.

"Masih baik (pertumbuhan 3.7 peratus yang dicatatkan bagi 2023). Beberapa negara mengumumkan kemelesetan ekonomi, tetapi Malaysia masih berkembang pesat didorong ekonomi domestik yang mantap," katanya.

Ketua Ekonomi dan Kewangan Sosial Bank Muamalat Malaysia, Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid, berkata data menunjukkan Keluaran Dalam Negara Kasar (KDNK) Malaysia lebih rendah daripada jangkaan kepada 3 peratus pada suku keempat 2023, lebih perlahan berbanding unjuran awal 3.4 peratus dan 3.3 peratus pada suku sebelumnya.

Beliau berkata, semakan utama yang dilihat dalam bacaan akhir ialah sektor perkhidmatan dan pembuatan berbanding anggaran awal.

Katanya, sektor perkhidmatan merosot daripada unjuran awal 4.7 peratus kepada 4.2 peratus, manakala industri pembuatan disemak

jauh lebih rendah daripada pertumbuhan 0.1 peratus kepada penguncupan 0.3 peratus.

Sebaliknya, sektor perlombongan, pembinaan dan pertanian disemak masing-masing daripada 3.7 peratus, 2.5 peratus dan 1.2 peratus kepada 3.8 peratus, 3.6 peratus dan 1.9 peratus, katanya.

"Terdapat penurunan besar dalam eksport bersih sebanyak 35.6 peratus pada suku akhir 2023 berbanding penurunan 22.7 peratus pada suku sebelumnya.

"Ini menunjukkan ekonomi Malaysia adalah ekonomi terbuka dan oleh itu, sebarang pergeseran dalam permintaan luar memberi kesan kepada eksport dan sektor pembuatan kita.

"Oleh itu, permintaan dalam negeri akan menjadi faktor asas utama yang akan memastikan pertumbuhan keseluruhan Malaysia kekal stabil. Justeru, dasar fiskal dan monetari adalah faktor utama untuk memastikan pertumbuhan berdaya tahan pada 2024," katanya.

Bagi 2024, Mohd Afzanizam berkata, pihaknya menjangkakan KDNK sekitar 4.3 peratus dengan permintaan domestik menjadi pamacu utama pertumbuhan keseluruhan.

Krisis geopolitik yang berterusan di Asia Barat dan Eropah Timur dan berpotensi merebak ke kawasan lebih luas, memberikan ancaman kepada ekonomi dunia, terutama peningkatan kadar inflasi yang berpotensi meningkat semula



Aimi Zulhazmi Abdul Rashid,
Penganalisis Ekonomi UniKL Business School



MASYARAKAT Orang Asli mendaftar Padu melalui kaunter yang dibuka sempena Program Jelajah eKasih di Padang Dewan Kompleks Serbaguna MDGM di Gua Musang, Kelantan pada 27 Januari lalu. – AIMUNI TUAN LAH

KOSMO 20/2

3.56 juta rakyat sudah daftar Padu

PETALING JAYA – Seramai 3.56 juta individu sudah membuat pendaftaran Sistem Pangkalan Data Utama (Padu) di seluruh negara setakat pukul 11.59 malam semalam.

Menerusi laman Facebook Padu Official, jumlah tersebut dikeluarkan berdasarkan sumber data pentadbiran yang telah dikemas kini.

“Terima kasih diucapkan kepada rakyat Malaysia yang telah

mengemas kini maklumat dalam sistem Padu,” katanya.

Dalam pada itu, melihat kepada data yang dikongsikan, tiga negeri iaitu Selangor, Sarawak dan Johor merekodkan jumlah pendaftaran tertinggi sejak sistem itu dilancarkan 2 Januari lepas dengan masing-masing melepasi 340,000 pendaftar.

Terdahulu, Ketua Perangkawan, Datuk Seri Mohd. Uzir Mahidin berkata, seramai 1.2

juta penjawat awam di seluruh negara telah mendaftar Padu setakat Jumaat lalu.

Mohd Uzir berkata, jumlah itu merupakan kira-kira 80 peratus daripada 1.5 juta penjawat awam yang direkodkan malah pencapaian tersebut amat membanggakan.

Beliau turut berterima kasih atas komitmen kakitangan kerajaan yang memberikan kerjasama yang baik.

KOSMO
20 FEB 2024

Tarikh: