

Malaysia: PSM urges gov't to implement universal basic income-type programme

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Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) president Dr Michael Jeyakumar said the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government appears ready to spend money to boost the economy in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic but it needs to do so effectively in order to help everyone in the country.

He suggested one of the ways the government could achieve this was by providing a modified universal basic income (UBI) to anyone who does not currently have a source of income.

“For PSM, we see UBI as a concept that can be utilised to address a problem that we are going to face because of the recession that is going to happen in Malaysia.

“Whatever happens, we must make sure that no one in Malaysia goes hungry. That means every family must have an income. If they do not have work, then the government must make sure they can get some income to buy food.

“We propose a modified UBI, where people who are currently employed in the public and private sector or those who get pension over RM1,000 a month will get left out, but those in this category (with no source of income) will get a monthly stipend for the next one year.

“The purpose is so no one goes hungry,” Jeyakumar said at a forum on UBI which was live-streamed on Facebook last night.

PSM is proposing RM1,000 a month under the modified UBI as the amount should be enough to cover the purchase of basic food supplies but not too high that it discourages people from working.

“The economy has still got to run, we have to produce goods and services, we do not want people not to go to work because they are too comfortable with the UBI.

“So it has to be below the minimum wage but not too low because the minimum wage in Malaysia is also not that great,” he said.

This policy must be implemented immediately as there was an urgent need for such a programme.

This was because the government’s current policies, such as wage subsidies, are only for formal workers, he said.

There were many non-formal workers, such as rubber smallholders and those who work odd jobs in the *kampung* who do not benefit from many of the current government policies, said Jeyakumar.

The PN government seems to be open to the idea of supporting the people’s needs but the pertinent question is how they are going to spend the money, he added.

Jeyakumar said government money was going to policies that support things like the digital economy which would benefit a lot of small firms and businesspeople.

“But in the *kampung* and small towns, people still cannot put food on the table.

“But all this will be covered under a modified UBI. We need it now to make sure no family goes without food,” Jeyakumar stressed.

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