

# Think tank says challenge lies in ensuring groundwork matches rhetoric

By **Luqman Hakim** - October 15, 2023 @ 7:20am



Think tank Social and Economic Research Initiative said the 2024 Budget demonstrated the government's commitment to addressing economic disparity. - NSTP/MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

KUALA LUMPUR: Think tank Social and Economic Research Initiative said the 2024 Budget demonstrated the government's commitment to addressing economic disparity.

Its chief executive officer, Dr Helmy Haja Mydin, however, said the challenge lied in implementation and the government must work hard to ensure that the "groundwork matches the rhetoric".

He lauded the 2024 Budget's recognition of the younger generation's financial struggles via the expansion of the Second Chance Policy for those under 40 with debts below RM200,000.

The increase in the Rahmah Cash Aid initiative from RM350 to RM500, he said, also demonstrated the government's commitment to easing their financial burden and enhancing their quality of life.

He also commended the decision to limit public university fees to RM1,500 starting January 2024 and permit financially disadvantaged students to register for subjects without immediate payment.

"Coupled with the decision to provide an advance RM1,500 loan from the National Higher Education Fund Corporation, this move is significant in improving higher education accessibility for all deserving students," he said.

Dr Helmy said the budget's micro, small- and medium-scale enterprise digitalisation initiatives, such as allocating RM40 million for the Shop Malaysia Online programme and reducing the capital allowances claim period for ICT equipment, were commendable.

"However, the absence of complementary efforts to enhance digital skills among local entrepreneurs points to a crucial gap in the policy.

"This deficiency may hamper the effectiveness of the overall strategy and attempts must be made to design a comprehensive approach to maximise the benefits of this initiative," he said.

On the budget's electric vehicle initiatives, Dr Helmy said while they were a step in the right direction, they fell short of being a transformative policy capable of addressing sustainability and traffic congestion comprehensively.

"This green policy should be framed as one that reduces our reliance on fossil fuels, especially in the government sector, as we seek to eventually transition to clean energy alternatives."

He said net-zero emissions strategies must be seamlessly integrated with urban planning policies, ensuring a holistic approach that tackled environmental concerns and congestion issues simultaneously.