

Move to make education accessible, equitable

KUALA LUMPUR: The expansion of the Early Schooling Aid (BAP) to all students irrespective of household income highlights the government's commitment to position education as a strategic investment with inclusive and sustainable access.

Besides easing parents' expenses, BAP also focuses on strengthening student readiness as a key element in developing knowledgeable human capital.

The government continues to accord serious attention to education as a means of producing competitive individuals, ensuring that the younger generation remains empowered.

Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) chief executive officer Professor Datuk Dr Mohammad Shatar Sabran said the expansion of BAP to all students, including those in Form Six, regardless of household income reflected the Madani government's commitment to ensure continuity of quality education for all.

All children have the right to enter the schooling system regardless of socio-economic background.

"Education is highly significant as it acts as a catalyst for creativity and a driver of innovation, equipping the younger generation with skills needed to compete in the job market.

"However, some are unable to fully enjoy this due to financial constraints.

"For some, RM150 may seem small, but it has significantly eased parents' burden in preparing essential schooling needs," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, in tabling the 2026 Budget last year, said the BAP would be continued this year, with nearly RM800 million allocated to 5.2 million students from Year One to Form Five in government schools, regardless of parents' income.

They will receive a one-off payment of RM150.

Shatar said the assistance was not merely short-term support, but also served as a catalyst for students' emotional stability, particularly during the early

stages of schooling, which often represented a critical adjustment phase for children and adolescents.

He said the initiative could ensure that every student began the schooling session on an equal footing, thereby reducing the risk of absenteeism.

"We often highlight that BAP eases parents' financial burden, but from a psychological perspective, it has a significant impact on children. Physical preparations, such as clothing, footwear and school supplies, are closely linked to students' emotional well-being," he said.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia education expert Dr Anuar Ahmad said distributing the assistance in schools was the most effective approach in strengthening ties between teachers, pupils and parents.

"This assistance is important as a supplementary support, particularly for those in need.

"The distribution of assistance at schools through parent-teacher engagements also provides an opportunity for closer interaction, which is an important element in children's education," he said.

However, Anuar, who is also deputy director of the Malaysian Inclusive Development and Advancement Institute, suggested that BAP should be determined based on actual needs, like the number of school-going children and parents' financial capacity.

He said the poorest families should receive more assistance to ensure that government allocations were utilised equitably to generate greater impact for those in need.

Private sector employee Mohamad Shofi Mat Isa, 40, said the aid had helped reduce about 30 per cent of the cost of school supplies for his three children.

"If asked whether it is sufficient, even RM1,000 per child may not necessarily be enough.

"Nevertheless, I am thankful to the government for the assistance, which genuinely helps parents like us," he said. **Bernama**



Professor Datuk Dr Mohammad Shatar Sabran



Dr Anuar Ahmad