

Increased Sara aid brings relief to rural folks

SIBU: The increase in Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (Sara) rate to RM200 per month, effective this month, has brought significant relief to low-income families in rural Sarawak, particularly in coping with the rising cost of living.

Civil servant Austin Nuyang Joseph, 49, from the Nanga Tada Resettlement Scheme in Kanowit, welcomed the Government's move, saying the additional assistance has been very helpful in managing his household expenses.

"My only daughter is currently studying at the Teacher Education Institute in Sabah. I'm the sole breadwinner, while my wife is a homemaker," he said.

"With the increased Sara allowance, I'm able to purchase kitchen essentials, allowing me to allocate more of my monthly salary towards supporting my daughter," he said.

Austin, who also receives Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) of RM750 a year, said the financial assistance is especially bene-

ficial when unexpected expenses arise.

"I save the STR assistance for emergencies, especially during my child's semester breaks. After purchasing a flight ticket, our kitchen budget usually becomes quite limited — so this aid truly makes a difference," he added.

The Madai government had announced an increase in the Sara assistance to RM2,100 annually for the poor and hardcore poor households registered under the eKasih system — a significant jump from RM1,200 provided last year.

This enhanced allocation is seen as a crucial step in supporting vulnerable groups amid ongoing economic challenges.

Between January and March 2025, recipients will receive RM100 monthly directly credited to their MyKad accounts. Beginning April 1, the monthly amount will increase to RM200, benefiting an expanded pool of 5.4 million recipients.

Meanwhile, Phase Two STR, which

began on March 24, involved 8.5 million recipients, representing about 60 per cent of Malaysian adults — with total disbursements amounting to RM650.

Housewife Cheria Maran, 32, from Sungai Mador in Bintangor, also expressed her gratitude for the assistance received.

She shared that her main expenses are focused on kitchen necessities and baby formula.

"Some may see the amount as small, but for us in rural areas, where the cost of goods is sometimes even higher than in the city, this assistance makes a big difference.

"When part of the financial burden is lifted, the emotional and mental stress is also reduced. That's something many people don't realise," she said.

She added that almost all shops in small towns such as Bintangor and Sarikei have been registered under the programme, enabling recipients to purchase essential items simply by using their MyKad.