

THURSDAY
February 4, 2021

'New BKSS 5.0 programmes to help SMEs keen on e-commerce'

Sam Chua

KUCHING: The Sarawak government has introduced two new programmes under the Sarawakku Sayang Special Assistance (BKSS) 5.0 package to enhance the productivity of entrepreneurs as well as expand their market through digital platforms, said Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan.

He said the first new initiative is the RM20 million Go Digital Sarawak Programme, which is introduced in view of the rising trend of entrepreneurs venturing their business online to earn income during the pandemic.

This programme is offering assistance in the form of grants with a maximum of RM10,000 to purchase hardware for entrepreneurs interested to venture into e-commerce and e-payment.

'Over 2,000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are expected to benefit from this new programme,' he told a press conference at Wisma Sumber Alam, here yesterday.

He said the second initiative is the RM2 million Digital Marketing Training Programme with the similar objective of encouraging entrepreneurs to adapt to digital economy.

'This programme will be conducted for free for local entrepreneurs who are interested. The programme is also expected to benefit over 2,000 SMEs,' he added.

In addition, Awang Tengah said the state government will be providing interest subsidy for three and half years to qualified entities under the Penjana Tourism Financing, with an allocation of RM2.5 million, to assist local SMEs in tourism and tourism-related subsectors.

'The federal government has allocated RM1 billion under the Penjana package for SMEs in tourism and tourism-related subsectors throughout Malaysia for working capital only.'

'The scheme provides loans of up to RM300,000 with three per cent interest for seven years, inclusive of six months' moratorium,' he said.

He said the targeted core tourism sector under the Penjana scheme are tourism accommodation premises; travel agencies and tour operators; and transportation for tourist, while tourism-related subsectors



Awang Tengah speaks at the press conference. With him are (from right) Mussen, Len Talif, Mohd Naroden (front left) and others. — Photo by Roystein Emmor

This programme is offering assistance in the form of grants with a maximum of RM10,000 to purchase hardware for entrepreneurs interested to venture into e-commerce and e-payment.

Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan

are medical tourism; meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) ecosystem; money services businesses; and tourism-related retail, recreation and wellness activities.

Awang Tengah, who is also Second Minister of Urban Development and Resources, pointed out that to date, 26 applications from Sarawak SMEs have been approved with loans amounting to RM5.8 million under the scheme and with interest subsidy amounting to RM706,319.

'Sarawak is the only state in Malaysia that provides the three-and-a-half-years interest subsidy for Special Relief Fund (SRF), Targeted Relief and Recovery Facility (TRRF), and Penjana Tourism Financing (PTF),' he said.

Moreover, the deputy chief minister announced an additional RM20 million allocation for the Graduates

Towards Entrepreneurship Programme (Gerak) and Vocational and Technical Entrepreneurs Programme (Ustev).

The Sarawak government has rolled out the Gerak and Ustev programmes to encourage the state's youth, especially graduates and those with technical skills who wish to get involved in business, he pointed out.

He said the programmes are to offer financial assistance in the form of grants of up to RM20,000 for those aged below 50 years, for the purpose of starting and expanding their business.

Awang Tengah, who is also Minister of International Trade and Industry, Industrial Terminal and Entrepreneur Development, said the state government had allocated RM34 million for the two programmes last year, and his ministry had approved a total of

375 applications worth RM5.73 million since the programmes started in 2018.

Over 1,300 entrepreneurs, mostly youths, are expected to benefit from both programmes this year, he said.

He said his ministry had consulted various entrepreneurship associations, financial institutions and industry players to formulate the latest assistance packages, comprising seven initiatives, for SMEs in the state.

He pointed out any applications related to the Small and Medium Industry Financing Scheme (SPIKS), Gerak, Ustev, Go Digital Sarawak Programme and Digital Marketing Training Programme can be made via his ministry.

For the three-and-a-half-year interest subsidy under TRRF and PTF, he said interested entrepreneurs can submit their applications to 12 local banks, namely CIMB, Hong Leong Bank, Maybank, Muamalat Bank, Public Bank, RHB, SME Bank, Agrobank, Alliance Bank, Ambank, Bank Rakyat and Bank Islam.

Among those at the press conference were Awang Tengah's assistant ministers Datuk Mohd Naroden Majais, Datuk Malcolm Mussen and Datu Len Talif Salleh.