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THE RISING COST OF LIVING

Inflation has caused the cost of living to rise. There are many factors as to why this is occurring such as the outbreak of Russo-Ukrainian war, Movement Control Order, labour shortage and the new increase of the minimum wage. Devaluation of ringgit and debts also contribute to the rise in the cost of living. The rise in the cost of living has a huge impact on the people of Malaysia, especially on B40 and M40 households. Many of people's basic needs such as housing may not be met as more and more expenses need to be covered on general necessities. The decrease in economic growth also leads to more unemployment [2]. The unity government is deeply concerned with the deteriorating situation and is committed to solve the problem as soon as possible.

Tackling the high cost of living, weakening ringgit and looming recession are the top priorities of the unity government [3]. The unity government strongly believes that immediate actions should be taken to combat this issue. We call for more subsidies to relieve the burdens of low-income group, and more supports for growing industries such as tourism and infrastructure. As of today, the unity government has introduced different initiatives aiming at combating this issue. One of them is the "Menu Rahmah" programme, which offers lunch and dinner for no more than RM5 [2]. The unity government has also activated the National Action Council on Cost of Living to tackle this issue [2]. In addition, the unity government has introduced subsidies such as *bantuan persekolahan*, *bantuan keluarga*, and *bantuan bujang* [4]. The unity government also provides 2 million ringgits to small and medium enterprises through MyIPO Intellectual Property Fund [5]. The unity government noted the importance of growing industry, which can be proved in the move by the government to invest into films and through FINAS to help our film industry [5]. The unity government acknowledges that our actions may not be well suited for all and welcomes any suggestions or criticisms.

On behalf of the Ministry of Communications and Digital, I would like to propose the following solutions:

1. Cheaper telecommunications services especially for vulnerable groups

Earlier this year, the unity government has introduced Unity Package, which provide prepaid mobile data for B40, veterans, people with disabilities and senior citizens at only RM5 per month [6]. We propose that more improvement to be made to the programme such as increasing the current speed and service, lowering the price and expand the beneficiaries to include other vulnerable groups such as M40. We are also looking into the possibility of reducing prices of services offered by local telecommunications companies [7].

2. Stronger measure to tackle cybersecurity, data leakage and online scams

Tackling cybersecurity, data leakage and online scams are my top priorities as the current Minister of Communications and Digital [8]. These issues should be taken seriously as it poses a greater security risk to companies and individuals, resulting in loss of revenues through critical data breach and scam, which might discourage foreign investments. We propose stronger measures such as the establishment of Malaysia Cyber Security Commission [9] to strengthen cybersecurity in the country.

3. Continuation of current projects

Jalan Digital Negara project (JENDELA) Phase 2 aims to provide Internet coverage to the last three percent of mainly rural areas [10], bridging the digital divide between rural and urban areas and provide more job opportunities. Digital Content Grant supports local creative content companies in marketing their digital content [11]. We propose that these projects and many others such as DE Rantau be allocated proper fundings and continued under proper management.

REVIEWING THE SECURITY OFFENCES (SPECIAL MEASURES) ACT 2012

The Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012, also known as SOSMA is a controversial law to provide for special measures relating to security offences for the purpose of maintaining public order and security and for connected matters. The law provides broad powers against subversion, threats to public order, acts of terrorism, sabotage and espionage. Human rights defenders and politicians have described SOSMA as draconian because a police officer may arrest and detain an individual without a warrant for no more than 28 days under sub-section 4(5). This prevents checks and balances on the powers of the investigating authorities. Some criticize the law to be abused by the government to silence critics, for example Muhyiddin used SOSMA to detain several DAP members in 2019 over alleged links to LTTE organization. [12]

In line with KEADILAN stance on SOSMA, I strongly disagree with the current provisions of the SOSMA that allow detention without trial [13]. I strongly condemn terrorism committed on Malaysian soil, but I am deeply horrified with the use of draconian laws as it infringes on an individual's fundamental rights guaranteed in Article 5 of the Federal Constitution. I believe that some provisions in SOSMA need to be amended to harmonize the law with the principles of universal human rights. However, I acknowledge that our opinion does not represent the positions of all parties, and I have full confidence that the unity government will be able to find middle grounds that satisfy all parties. To protest against SOSMA, I have voted against the extension of the enforcement of subsection 4(5) of SOSMA, which allows extension of detention for no more than 28 days, in three different occasions in parliament, on 23/3/22 [14], 20/7/22 [15] and 26/7/22 [16].

I propose that section (6), titled 'Power to intercept communication', and section (24) to be immediately amended or repealed. Section (6) granted Law Enforcement powers to intercept and store any kind of communication, including digital communications, without any judicial oversight. Section 24 of the act further stipulated, that law enforcement do not have to reveal how they obtained such information [17], which acts as blank cheque to the investigative bodies to utilize all manner of surveillance and intelligence gathering, regardless of their legality of their methods. I am deeply horrified by the fact that SOSMA makes it legal for authorities to execute mass surveillance programmes without revealing how the evidence was obtained. Government surveillance will have profound effects on our people's actions and privacy, and it is a violation of basic human rights. Hence, I urge that these provisions to be immediately amended to delegalize surveillance and our privacy law to be strengthened.

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