

**CONTENT OF DAILY NEWS JULY 2022**

BIL.	DATE	NEWS	PAGES
1.	16.07.2022	RM423M In PERKESO Payments Frozen Due To False Claims	2
2.	19.07.2022	All Riled Up Over Paltry Canteen Fare – Food Supplementary Programme (FSP)	3
3.	19.07.2022	'What Can You Eat For RM2.50? – Food Supplementary Programme (FSP)	4
4.	19.07.2022	Get Firms To Support FSP, Grow Own Veggies, Schools Urged – Food Supplementary Programme (FSP)	
5.	30.07.2022	Ex-MIDF Director Fined RM85,000 Over Forged Document	5

NST | 16 JULY 22 | PAGE 5

OP HIRE

# RM423M IN PERKESO PAYMENTS FROZEN DUE TO FALSE CLAIMS

Move to suspend payouts based on monitoring by anti-fraud division, says CEO

TENGKU ZARITH SOFIA  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**T**HE Social Security Organisation (Perkeso) has suspended RM423 million in payments for the Employment Recruitment Incentives Programme (PenjanaKerjaya) due to false claims by employers and training providers nationwide under Op Hire.

It was launched last Wednesday after the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and Perkeso reviewed gathered information on PenjanaKerjaya money beneficiaries since May and found that certain employers had made false claims and misappropriated these funds.

Perkeso chief executive officer Datuk Seri Dr Mohammed Azman Aziz Mohammed said Perkeso frowned upon the malpractice issue because the financial assis-

tance was to help those who qualified, according to the requirements and procedures.

"The action to suspend the payment was made based on data analysis and continuous monitoring by Perkeso's Anti-Fraud, Ethics and Integrity Division (AFEI).

"AFEI works closely with the Finance Division and Perkeso's Employment Insurance System Office to ensure that each application is properly assessed before payment is made to those qualified for it," he said.

Azman said up to yesterday, Socso had provided RM2.34 billion to employers and employees

under the PenjanaKerjaya programme, involving 45,379 employers to place 327,789 jobseekers.

Perkeso stressed on the need for employers to be honest and have integrity when submitting applications for government assistance programmes, including the PenjanaKerjaya programme.

"Any employer who has misused the PenjanaKerjaya funds or who has submitted an application without following the rules must come forward and make a voluntary repayment or contact Perkeso to solve this problem before action is taken," Azman said.

TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2022 • NewStraitsTimes

## NEWS / Story of the day

NO REVIEW IN 7 YEARS

# ALL RILED UP OVER PALTRY CANTEEN FARE

RM2.50 per meal for peninsula and RM3 for Sabah, Sarawak no longer enough, say operators

VEENA BABULAL AND  
QISTINA SALLEHUDDIN  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**P**ARENTS, teachers and canteen operators have taken the Education Ministry to task after another picture of paltry meals served under the Food Supplementary Programme (FSP) was circulated on social media.

There were also photos of food containers with plain noodles and the occasional shred of carrot in some servings.

The public have called on the ministry to explain these poor meals and raised questions if enough had been allocated to the programme meant to boost the nutrition of children from poor families.

Earlier this year, a social media user claimed his grandson was served a packet of plain rice, some gravy, a shred of carrot and one or two florets of cauliflower. As the picture of the meal made its way through social media, the ministry pledged to investigate the matter.

Malaysia School Canteen Operators Association president Khairuddin Hamzah said the ministry should raise the allocation that has stagnated at RM2.50 per day per student for Peninsular Malaysia and RM3 for Sabah and Sarawak since 2015.

He said since the pandemic, a third of the 10,000 canteen operators had quit, and if the per meal allocation was not raised to RM4 and RM4.50 respectively, another 1,000 would have to close shop by year-end.

Khairuddin said operators would go bust if they had to follow the programme's 25 menus that served either chicken or eggs in each meal with various vegetables and fruits, at the current rate and portions.

"Such a rate in this economy is unreasonable, how are we expected to survive? On average even before the current inflation,



A canteen worker preparing packs of chicken rice for a school's Food Supplementary Programme in Melaka in 2016. Rising prices of food mean canteen operators struggle to provide nutritious meals. (Inset) Khairuddin Hamzah FILE PIC



we were spending RM3 and above for these meals," he said.

He said the rising price of chicken and eggs almost wiped out any profit the operators could earn from their tender.

"I can still make something because less than 10 per cent of the students are under this programme. The situation is similar for operators in Putrajaya, but for operators handling schools with a high number of students under this programme, including from the Orang Asli and Special Education Schools, it's impossible.

"Operators have no option, if the schools have kids under the programme we have to feed them, that is in the terms for our tender, so what else can we do besides hang up our aprons and look for money elsewhere?"

Earlier, the *New Straits Times* reported that operators were cutting down on the use of chicken for paying students. However, Khairuddin said it was impossible to tweak the menu or change portions and ingredients as teachers checked all meals prepared. He also said if an operator wanted to tweak the meal, they had to get the endorsement of the parent-teacher association.

"Schools that feel their FSP students have been shortchanged have the right to report these operators and suspend their pay-

ment for food under the programme."

He said he looked into the circumstances surrounding the controversial picture of the FSP food box containing plain noodles and believed the picture was taken when the operator was preparing the meal.

"That's why the other compartments (in the food box) were empty," he said.

Twitter user "Izwar Awani" who first shared the photo claimed that it was from a primary school in Pahang, saying that the principal and canteen owner had been warned but to no avail.

The thread was also responded to by a "Sarah", who shared a photo of a meal of rice, chicken and watermelon given to children in Sarawak.

"Asmodeus" questioned if the ministry wanted operators to lose money.

"They don't even get back their capital this way. The policy has never been reviewed? This is why many canteen operators have quit."

The FSP menus can be viewed at [www.moe.gov.my/pekeliling/3570-spk-bt-19-rancangan-makanan-bahar-rmt-di-sekolah-rendah/file](http://www.moe.gov.my/pekeliling/3570-spk-bt-19-rancangan-makanan-bahar-rmt-di-sekolah-rendah/file).

Based on the circular it has been in effect since July 17, 2020.



TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2022 • NewStraitsTimes

Story of the day / NEWS

3

## 'What can you eat for RM2.50?'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Stakeholders of the Food Supplementary Programme (FSP) are calling on the government to increase the allocation for the programme to reflect the high cost of living and rising prices of food.

They said the current costing of RM2.50 or RM3 per day per child was not sufficient and would affect the quality of food served to the over 600,000 children in the programme.

The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Wang Heng Suan said the government should increase the allocation by at least RM1.

"What can you eat with RM2.50, especially in urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur," he told the *New Straits Times* when asked whether the rate should be increased.

Wang said the government could have resolved this issue if it had managed to reduce the cost of living. However, he said it was now too late as prices were out of control.

He said ideally, the government should allocate RM4 or RM4.50 or more, but could start with a RM1 ringgit increase.

This hike in spending was proposed by Simping Kenggam member of parliament Maszlee Malik when debating the 2022 Budget last year. The former education minister, however, said more should be spent now.

On posts circulating on social media claiming that some students were served plain noodles under the programme, Wang said the incident might be isolated.

"The FSP programme has standard operating procedures on the kind of food prepared for students. Let's say the government spends RM2 for each student's meal, which includes *mee goreng* and a fried egg. This is stated in black and white.



Tan Sri Alimuddin Mohd Dom

"However, in this case there may have been a shortage of noodles in that area on that day."

Wang also said students could ask for more if the portion was insufficient.

However, it is understood that if there were issues regarding portions, quality, safety and hygiene, teachers and parents needed to inform the principal so that the operator could be warned, suspended or have the tender revoked.

Former education director-general Tan Sri Alimuddin Mohd Dom said the Education Ministry should determine how much should be spent on the FSP via dialogues with canteen operators, parents, teachers and principals.

"They have to thrash it out, weigh all angles and look into solutions so that the goals of the FSP are realised. Not just nutrition, even the taste has to be discussed," he said, when commenting on claims that the meals were bland.

He said a dialogue would allow operators to state how much could be done with an allocation.

Alimuddin said operators and parents could also raise financial and logistics constraints, especially in rural areas where students have to travel up to two hours to get to school.

"This is because the situation is unique in every school. We cannot tar them all with the same



Wang Heng Suan

brush," he said, adding that some rural operators in Sabah and Sarawak were allowed to substitute items, such as noodles.

On suggestions that the parent-teacher associations (PTA) seek corporate aid to supplement the FSP allocation and provide packed lunches for students without the involvement of canteen operators, Alimuddin said that approach would be "complex".

"PTAs that are outspoken and proactive are usually in urban areas. However the FSP is concentrated in rural or underdeveloped areas, such as islands," he said.

Parent Action Group for Education president Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim had raised a similar concern with the NST, that parents from less privileged backgrounds might not speak up for fear that their children's free meals might be axed.

Alimuddin said food handlers must be trained to ensure safety, cleanliness and nutrition as per the Health Ministry's standards. He also called on teachers to document the meals.

"They have to be on the ball and log the food and give a brief summary on quantities, portions, taste, nutrition and so on. This can be used as evidence in case the canteen operator short-changes the school and students in terms of the number of meal packages received and so on."

"This is their job. It is the teachers' and principals' job to state what is happening to ensure this programme runs smoothly."

"It would be a shame to see children go hungry and the programme fail because records were not kept and we missed data crucial to gauge the efficacy of the FSP," he said, while dismissing grouses from teachers that the programme added to their already heavy workload.

Last month, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said more children were experiencing stunted growth, from 17 per cent in 2015 to 21.8 per cent in 2019.

He said the trend of nutritional deficiency among children, especially those from low-income families, was expected to increase due to the protracted Covid-19 pandemic and its economic impact on the people.



Sheep grazing at the Kebun Kebun Bangsar urban farm in Kuala Lumpur. (Inset) Ng Sek San. PHOTOS BY ROHANNIS SHUKRI

## Get firms to support FSP, grow own veggies, schools urged

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The lack of nutrition in the meals served under the Food Supplementary Programme (FSP) can be addressed with the help of funding from private companies.

Schools also have to spring into action by cultivating vegetable gardens, said education lobbyist Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim.

"The issue can be quickly solved if local corporations decide to share their profits within communities that they operate in."

"Schools or the ministry also don't have to groan about the workload, paperwork or red tape if corporate heads give back through these institutions."

"They can top up the government spending by however much they like for the benefit of the children, and these funds can be paid to canteen operators to prepare better meals. The aid doesn't have to stop there, they can also help with other projects."

The Parent Action Group for Education chair said schools could cultivate vegetables and fruits and distribute them to canteen operators for the FSP meals.

She said those with insufficient space could try vertical and hydroponic farming techniques.

"If the vegetables are sufficient and the corporates are generous enough to pay for the meals for all children, one day all children can enjoy free meals at school regard-

less of background."

Azimah said the care of the gardens should be handled by the students under the supervision of teachers and they could engage community gardening enthusiasts to show them the ropes.

Ng Sek San, the founder of urban farming collective Kebun Kebun Bangsar here, said the group's volunteers would be glad to show schools how to set up vegetable patches.

"We can help them start and then they can continue on their own."

He said lettuce, bak choy, ladies finger, brinjal, herbs and chillies required only a month or two to cultivate.

"I can give the schools in my area seedlings for free," he said.

"Alam Flora and City Hall also give out compost for free, and all they have to do is get the tools and equipment. These plants also do not need much land. The school only has to focus on tending the patch."

Ng said it was crucial that students learned these skills so that they could sustain themselves in times of food shortages.

He cited the Dignity for Children Foundation's kitchen garden in Sentul, which was cared for by the urban poor and marginalised kids to grow edibles that the non-profit establishment prepared for hundreds of children daily.



Breakfast served at a Kota Kinabalu school in 2020. Canteen operators must prepare Food Supplementary Programme meals to specifications or risk the revocation of their tender. FILE PIC.

New Straits Times | 30 July 2022 | Page 6

## RM75,000 PAYMENT VOUCHER

# Ex-MIDF director fined RM85,000 over forged document

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A former director of the Malaysian Intellect Development Foundation (MIDF) was fined RM85,000 in default of six months' jail by the Sessions Court here yesterday for falsifying payment vouchers on expenditure by the Indian Community Transformation Unit (Mitra) funds for the Tamil Schools Post-Covid-19 Assistance (TAS-COVID) programme.

Judge Suzana Hussain meted out the fine on S.S. Vijaya Kumar, 47, after he pleaded guilty to an alternative charge of using a forged document.

Vijaya Kumar, who now works as an independent consultant, was accused of submitting a forged MIDF payment voucher dated Nov 24, 2020, amounting to RM75,000 for supply of hand sanitisers.

The offence was committed at

the Mitra office in Putrajaya on July 2 last year.

Vijaya Kumar, who was unrepresented, said he regretted his action and that he had cooperated with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission when he was on remand for six days.

"There was no financial transactions from the Mitra programme into my account and I have resigned from all positions at MIDF. Now I work as an independent consultant and my income is not stable," he added.

The accused had prepared a false supporting document, namely the MIDF payment voucher, in the final report to Mitra.

It was later discovered that the company named in the payment voucher did not supply any hand sanitisers for the programme.

**Bernama**