

Cost of living should be Budget's focus

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AS the Budget 2017 announcement grows closer, it will be the most discussed topic among Malaysians in days ahead.

Everybody is eager to know what will be in the Budget. Whatever it is, its main focus should be on the people's cost of living.

While the impact of the high cost of living is not significantly felt by the high-income Malaysians, lower-income people are certainly being affected due to the economic uncertainty not only to Malaysia, but the world as well.

The recent hike in public transportation fares and toll, and the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) more than a year ago have touched people's lives, especially in the lower-income bracket.

As such, the government needs to map out holistic and effective plans to help people manage the high cost of living. More special vouchers and discount cards should be offered in the next Budget to help ease the people's financial burden, especially senior citizens, disabled people, students and single parents.

It is also time for the government to seriously consider increasing workers'



Commuters wait to board an LRT train at KL Sentral. The writer says the recent hike in public transportation fares has affected people's lives, especially those in the lower income bracket. — Picture by Mukhriz Hazim

wages through amendments of existing laws on minimum wage.

Malaysians are greatly concerned with the development of our economy. The

government should continue its efforts to bolster the nation's economy and provide people with more and fairer opportunities to secure a higher standard

of living in line with their commitment to become a high-income nation by 2020.

Stern legal action needs to be taken against irresponsible individuals or traders making unreasonable profit as provided under Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011 (Act 723) and Goods and Services Tax Act 2014 (Act 762).

Consumers also need to use their power to complain to relevant agencies under the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry and boycott individuals or traders who are taking advantage of them. They should also continuously work with the government and non-governmental organisations such as consumer associations to find more effective ways to embrace financial challenges in coming years as well as reduce the burdens of high cost of living.

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