

TRAFFIC MATTERS

● Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) will be closing part of Bukit Bestari, Section 2, Shah Alam for upgrading works from Dec 14 to Jan 4, 2020. Motorists will be diverted via Jalan Akik 7/3 and Jalan Jati 3/6. Diversion and safety signs will be installed at strategic locations around the site. For details, call 03-5522 2734. ● Section 2.3 to Section 2.5 of Jalan FT 3150 Simeang Pulai-Lahat, Perak, will be temporarily closed on both directions until Dec 16 for road construction works.

ALUMNI GATHERING

All alumni of Hindu College, England, are welcome to attend a get-together on Dec 14, from noon to 4pm, at Crystal Crown Hotel, Petaling Jaya. Family members and friends are also invited. For details, call 03-2732 3732 (Ling Suan) / 7876 7376 (Sarniah) / 03-33745977/ 017-316 8717. ccc44.com

CANCER SCREENING

There will be a free colon cancer screening at KeepAble Cancer Community at 13, Jalan 16/4, Petaling Jaya, for those aged 45 and above. The final session will be held on Dec 21. For details, email: sheelarise@gmail.com or kathi1410@gmail.com

CHARITY ART EXHIBITION

Ramah Anai Cheshire Selangor (RACS) will be holding its first charity art exhibition called RACS2019. It is ongoing until Dec 21 at Kuala Lumpur City Art Gallery, Wisma YPS, Kuala Lumpur. Twenty-eight artists have contributed their works to benefit the lives of the disadvantaged of all races and walks of life. For details, call 03-4138 7118.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

A Christmas charity arts and crafts bazaar will be held on Dec 14 and 15, from 10am to 3pm, at Cafe, Waring, Love, Jalan PJS 5/13, Kota Damansara. There will be stalls selling handicrafts and souvenirs to help raise funds for a cancer patient. For details, call 012-698 1869.

PUBLIC FORUM

Lee Eye Centre will be organising a free public forum on Dec 14 at 2.30pm at its centre at 44-46, Persiaran Greenhill, Ipoh. Dr Ulmi Kalsom Mohd Ali will give a talk on cataract surgery. To register, call 05-254 0095/ 4953.

REUNION DINNER

Persatuan Bekas Murid Sekolah Kebangsaan Methodist Polok Assam Sising will be having a reunion dinner at Soon Lee Seafood Restaurant, Taiping on Dec 14. For details, call 05-807 4520, 016-556 0846 (Dumani) / 012-469 1388 (Liang Seri).

TALENT COMPETITION

Ipoh Parade will hold its 21st annual talent competition at the shopping centre on Dec 15. There are two categories — for participants aged 13 to 21, and for those aged 12 and below. Participants can sign up to perform solo or in a group of not more than eight persons. To register, visit <http://ipohparade.com>.

The urban poor are often faced with food insecurity. It is common knowledge that the urban poor's diet primarily consists of huge portions of carbohydrate as the tendency is to lead up on rice in a single meal to last them an entire day.

They are known to eat what is termed as "nasi bakar," which is heaps of rice with little or no nutritional dishes. And that often is their only meal for the day.

Muhammad Kamaruzzizi, founder of non-profit organisation Kerdines Malaysia, said this would lead to health problems such as diabetes and obesity in the long run.

The matter of food insecurity among the urban poor was among the various diet-related issues discussed at a dialogue session titled "Happier and Healthier Families — Making Eating Well Accessible for the B40 Community," hosted by Nestlé (M) Ltd.

Setiawangsa MP Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad revealed at the dialogue session that 2.78 million Malaysian households fell into the B40 category, which defined annual household income as below RM4,000.

He emphasised that the poor were not lazy and many of them in urban areas held two jobs just to make ends meet.

"They work very hard and it is not true that they are lazy," he said. Nik Nazmi said the poor in the country were often perceived as those from rural areas but it was the urban poor who experienced food insecurity as the latter were affected by the high cost of living in a city.

Muhammad, who conducts outreach programmes for the poor, concurred. "They (the urban poor) are always worried about going hungry and not certain of their next meal."

Universiti Putra Malaysia's School of Graduate Studies deputy dean Prof Dr Zaliha Mohd Shariff said a Unicef Malaysia study found that about 97% of those living in People's Housing Project (PPH) cited cost as their main factor for not making healthy food choices.

Muhammad said priority among the B40 was putting food on the table and ensuring there was enough for their family.

"They will then consider if the food is delicious. Nutrition is the last thing they think of, because they link it to cost," he said.

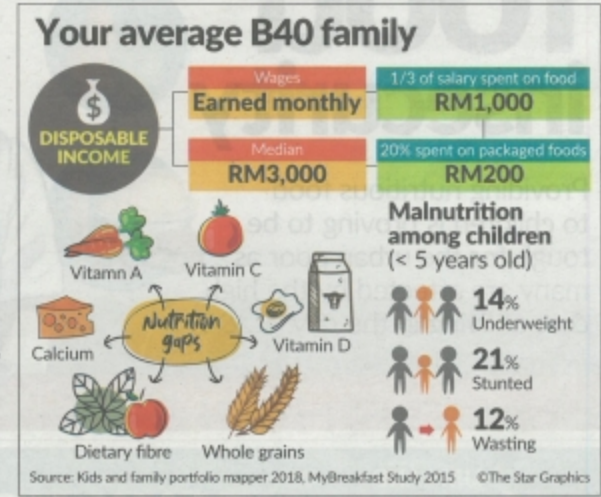
Nik Nazmi said it was reported that 15% of children at PPR flats were underweight, while 22% were stunted and 29% were malnourished.

Poverty leads to poor dietary habits

Studies find urban poor undernourished as cost factor overrides nutrition consideration



Nik Nazmi "A study found 15% of children at PPR flats are underweight while 22% are stunted and 29% are malnourished." — Photos: RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star



"When we meet children during programmes at schools, they know that they need to eat vegetables. "But when we serve them fried rice with vegetables, we notice that the children will remove all the vegetables before proceeding to eat," she shared of her observations at some of the school outreach programmes carried out by Nestlé.

She said 70% of the schoolchildren did not have breakfast. "One boy said no one would be at home when he got back and so, he grabbed anything that was left on the table to eat," she said. Muhammad said the diet of the poor was lacking in nutrition such

as calcium, iron and whole grain. "The food and beverage industry too has an important role to play in this matter. "Efforts in micro and macro-nutrient fortification of products are key in fighting stunting and wasting issues," she opined. She added that Nestlé would embark on ways for families to prepare meals for less than RM10 next year.

At the dialogue, it was also mentioned that lack of vitamins and minerals during crucial periods such as pregnancy, infancy and early childhood could lead to nutrient deficiencies, specifically malnutrition.

Malnutrition, if not addressed early on, could have lasting effects on a child's life — impacting their development, as well as potentially causing obesity, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. Failure to address the problem could subsequently have a multiplier effect, in which generations of families remain undernourished. "We are conscious of the challenges faced by the urban poor, which has resulted in nutrient deficiencies among this group, and that resolving this complex issue requires collaboration from all parties. "It is our hope that by driving the conversation together with

Muhammad: "Nutrition is the last thing the urban poor think of, because they link it to cost."



Nirmalah says the food and beverage industry too has an important role to play.



United Nations Malaysia research shows children at PPR flats consume a lot of 'instant gratification' food which makes them full but have no nutritional value. — Filipic

relevant stakeholders at today's dialogue session, we will be able to bring about a meaningful and (impactful) change on a larger scale, to improve nutritional intake and ultimately help nurture a healthier Malaysia," said Nirmalah.

Nik Nazmi said that when a segment of society did not prosper, the country would lose out.

He cited the population dynamics in his Setiawangsa constituency where there were four low-cost flats located less than 10km from the Kuala Lumpur Twin Towers, with many of the residents falling into the B40 community.

"We are creating an unhappy group of people, which is dangerous in the long run. They can see how others with money live as compared to those without," he noted.

He highlighted that the government was working towards formulating a National Children Wellbeing Roadmap to create a comprehensive programme for education, poverty, housing and nutrition. Starting next year, primary school pupils will receive free nutritious breakfast that will inculcate good eating habits and provide children the energy they need to stay focused in school, said the MP.

"For many in the B40 group, their children go to school without proper meals. This impacts their academic achievement. That leads to the vicious cycle of them not doing well in school," he said.

Nik Nazmi said the government was working with many corporations such as the food producers and retailers to assist with food



(From right) Nestlé Malaysia corporate wellness manager Wong Mei Ching showing Nestlé product containers to Nik Nazmi, Muhammad, Nirmalah and Prof Zaliha.

aid programmes. "Instead of allowing food to go to waste, the food is channelled to the homeless, those living in PPR flats and other deserving people," he said.

The Good Samaritan law — which will protect donors in case anything happens in the future due to their donations — is expected to be tabled soon.

Nik Nazmi said the government had also been aiding the poor over the past few years through the "Bantuan Sara Hidup" programme, which was distributed three times a year.

"Now the government is looking at a targeted subsidy programme, where instead of blanket subsidies for petrol and some goods, we will focus on giving subsidy to the poorest," he added.

Daily dilemma of food insecurity

Providing nutritious food to children is proving to be tough for the urban poor as many are affected by the high cost of living in the city. > 2&3



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