

## Permai aid should be extended to non-MCO states; Sarawak govt told to help SMEs too

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*Jonathan Chai*

**By Emma Victoria**

THE RM15 billion Permai aid package announced by the government yesterday could have been more comprehensive in rendering financial assistance to businesses in non-MCO states.

Sarawak Business Federation (SBF) secretary general Jonathan Chai said Wage Subsidy Programme 3.0 under SOCSO should be extended to all employers, including those in Sarawak, where most divisions are not placed under MCO.

"It is unfair to the non-MCO states as all businesses are also affected during this period of time," he said when contacted.

"Personally, I think the employers in the non-MCO states should be entitled to receive at least half of the prescribed subsidy if not more as all businesses irrespective of locality are adversely affected during the pandemic, especially restaurants and the tourism industry," he said.

Chai said that based on the feedback gathered, the Wage Subsidy Programme which offers direct financial assistance, has helped keep many businesses afloat and thereby save many jobs.

"Therefore, it is important for the government to continue with such an initiative which could offer realistic and practical assistance to businesses, especially the SMEs.

"Our state government should also consider coming up with additional stimulus packages to help the local business community, especially the SMEs, which is regarded as the backbone of our state economy," he said.

He said that apart from existing subsidies on utility bills and assessment rates, it would be better if the Sarawak government could go the extra mile to come up with their own version of the Wage Subsidy Program.