

SARA eases burden, boosts rural economy

JERTIH: The government's initiative to open business opportunities for rural grocery shops, cooperatives and minimarkets, through participation as Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (SARA) merchant partners, not only eases access for SARA recipients but also serves as a catalyst for the economic growth of small and medium-scale traders.

Manager of Coopmart Pasir Akar cooperative store, Zainol Zurian Baharuddin, said the grocery outlet operated under the Koperasi Tenaga Muda Hulu Besut (KOPTEM), located in the small town of Pasir Akar here, had recorded profit growth of up to 100 per cent, since joining the SARA programme in September 2023.

"This grocery store was the second business premises in the Besut district to register under the SARA programme, after a supermarket located in Jertih town.

"When the government first introduced SARA, KOPTEM's management immediately seized the opportunity to register Coopmart Pasir Akar as a SARA merchant partner.

"This is because we were confident that the move would not only have a positive impact on the cooperative's business, but also help villagers obtain basic necessities without having to travel to Jertih town, which is located more than 11 kilometres from this store," he told Bernama, when met at the cooperative premises, here.

Zainol Zurian said SARA redemptions at the premises increased from RM30,000 per month in 2023 to as much as RM120,000 per month by the end of last year.

He added that, during the same period, there was also a noticeable rise in transactions involving customers who were not SARA recipients.

"Becoming a SARA merchant partner directly helps promote our store to the public. As a result, rural grocery shops like ours have recorded a significant increase in both customer numbers and sales, including from non-SARA customers," he said.

— BERNAMA