


\$345.8m spent on helping very poor

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THE Federal and State Governments spent \$345.8 million to uplift the status of the very poor people in the country between 1989 and 1990. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the Dewan Rakyat.

The Prime Minister said 52,128 families benefited from the programme to help the very poor and were en-

joying much better living conditions.

Replying to Datuk Haji Mohamed Abu Bakar Rautin Ibrahim (BN-Kuala Kedah) he said the Orang Asli were also included in this special programme.

"However, the aid programme for the Orang Asli community is different as the Government has to take into consideration the social and cultural characteristics of the community," he said.

He said just because they were poor did not mean they had to wait for opportunities to come their way to

improve their living standards

"The Government has to take steps to provide these people the opportunities to increase their income so that they can live more comfortably," he said.

To a supplementary question from Encik Ahmad Nor (DAP-Bayan Baru), Dr Mahathir said the very poor families were offered houses at very low prices.

He said these houses were in good condition and people could live comfortably in them.

"We also provide them

with opportunities to set up small businesses and help them in crop cultivation.

"By taking advantage of this help, they will be able to earn good incomes and live in much better conditions."

To another question by Mr Wong Sin Nang (DAP-Lanang), who claimed that the people of Sarawak were deprived of employment opportunities in the wood-based industry because of the influx of illegal immigrants, Dr Mahathir said the foreign workers were employed because it was difficult to recruit locals."