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`Measures will be carried out according to schedule'

BUKIT MERTAJAM, Sat. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today the implementation of measures spelt out in the National Economic Recovery Plan would be expedited.

He said the Government would need a comprehensive implementation machinery besides holding weekly meetings to appraise progress of the plan.

"I have been asked by (Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to ensure implementation at the various levels follows the schedule," he said after chairing a meeting of the Penang Bumiputera Participation Steering Committee.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said he met officials of the Implementation and Co-ordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department yesterday to set the schedules for ministries, departments and agencies to avoid delays in implementing projects assigned to them.

He said the first such meeting to monitor implementation of the plan had been fixed for next week.

Anwar said he was dissatisfied with the progress of national and State projects in the first half of the year. He did not specify the projects.

"Given the present situation, we need better implementation. Part of the economic recovery plan has been carried out but we need speedier implementation.

"The Government will stress skills training and education in such areas as engineering and computers. More allocations will be made for these, including for Mara activity centres."

He said funds from the World Bank would be channelled to improve workers' skills too.

Malaysia had asked for US\$1 billion (RM4.1 billion) from the World Bank, of which US\$300 million had already been received. This money is to be used to help the poor, for education, social projects and retraining.

Earlier, at the ground-breaking ceremony for the RM118 million Japan-Malaysia Technical Institute (JMTI) at the Bukit Minyak Industrial Estate, Anwar instructed all Government departments and agencies to work ahead of schedule in implementing development projects.

In particular, he wanted attention given to projects of "strategic importance" in overcoming the economic slowdown, such as improving workers' skills.

Anwar said with retrenchments taking place, the emphasis now was retraining for the workers and those who would soon enter the job market.

He called for better use of training resources, including at vocational and technical institutions, to upgrade workers' skills and capabilities so that Malaysia could reduce its dependence on foreign workers.

He said the JMTI, which would train workers in engineering skills and offer diploma courses through twinning programmes with Japanese universities, would ensure synergy between technical training and industrial requirements.

Also present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek and Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia Issei Nomura.

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