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More than 300 projects revived (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Government's recent additional allocation of RM1 billion for education has revived more than 300 deferred projects involving schools, public universities and polytechnics.

The projects were deferred due to the country's economic problems.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the projects included the building of new schools, quarters for teachers, polytechnics and adding new facilities for schools and universities.

Out of the RM1 billion, Najib said RM90 million was for 175 primary schools, RM110 million for 83 secondary schools, RM78.6 million for two polytechnics and RM36.6 million for 85 projects to provide quarters for teachers.

"Besides that, RM58.78 million is for the renovation and upgrading of technical or vocational schools and RM334 million for public universities," Najib said after his Ministry's post-Cabinet meeting today.

Najib said the additional allocation would also enable construction work on two new polytechnics in Merlimau and Kota Kinabalu to continue.

On the building of new matriculation centres, Najib said work on four centres would begin soon.

"We are holding discussions with the contractor, Maju Holdings, on using steel during the construction of the centres as this would enable work to be completed faster. We hope they will be ready for the new intake next year.

"We are still waiting for funds to continue with work on a college in Kuala Lipis and two polytechnics in Kulim and Tanjung Malim. For these projects, we will have to wait for the outcome of the Government's discussions with the World Bank."

Meanwhile, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the Government was considering extending soft loans to several concessionaires of privatised road and highway projects facing difficulties. This is to enable them to start or continue work, he added.

Samy Vellu said the projects, worth about RM3 billion, included the widening of roads and construction of interchanges.

Speaking to reporters at the Parliament lobby, Samy Vellu said the Finance Ministry was now assessing the projects which should be given priority.

Among the projects are the RM600 million New Pantai Expressway, the Kajang Traffic Dispersal Scheme, the Cheras-Kajang highway and underground pedestrian crossings at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Jalan Raja Laut.

In Seremban yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government would be spending on large-scale infrastructural projects to help trigger spin-offs in other sectors and kick-start the economy.

Samy Vellu said his Ministry had been allocated RM500 million of the RM5 billion Infrastructure Development Fund announced by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim early this month.

Besides helping to revive critical infrastructure projects which had been deferred or abandoned, the fund would also help speed up on-going projects so that they can be completed on time to boost the economy, especially the construction sector.

On the RM3.6 billion East Coast highway, Samy Vellu said the concession company, Malaysia Mining Corporation, had asked for a RM150 million soft

loan to start the project.

He said the Cabinet today approved work to begin simultaneously in Pahang and Terengganu. Under the original plan, work was to begin from Karak to Kuantan, a distance of 175km, at a cost of RM2 billion.

But following appeals from the Terengganu Government, work will also start on the Jabor-Chendering stretch. Asked when work would start, he said it could begin within six months after the signing of the concession agreement scheduled for next month.

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