

03/09/1998

Rural projects to receive a boost: Annuar

Eirmalasang Bani

THE Cabinet has agreed to allow the special RM100 million allocation for ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs) and senators to be used to finance minor rural development projects, Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa said yesterday.

This move, he said, will complement the allocation set aside by the ministry for such projects.

Speaking at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, he said the activities include:

- * sponsoring sports activities and purchasing sports equipment such as jerseys and trophies (limited to not more than 30 per cent of the total allocation);
- * immediate grants for victims of flood, fire or other emergency cases;
- * assisting participants of Hardcore Poor Programmes in their small projects such as fish rearing;
- * funding motivational and computer courses;
- * financial support for programmes organised by Government agencies such as Kemas or Parent Teacher Associations;
- * computer purchases for youth organisations or farmers' associations, including training, software and hardware costs; and
- * assisting charity work by non-governmental organisations.

Currently, he said the allocation for sports, for example, is restricted to infrastructure projects. Some non-governmental organisations have also been unable to carry out charity work due to the difficulty in raising funds.

He also stressed that approval for the projects will depend on priority.

"The applicants have to go through proper channels so that the grants will not be wasted and used for personal political gains instead," he said.

In cases of emergency, should the allocation be fully disbursed, he said the MPs or senators can personally request for an additional grant from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself.

"The Prime Minister may decide whether to approve it or not ... it depends on the merit of the problems," he said.

Each minister and MP is given a RM500,000 allocation to be used for small rural development projects.

This means an MP, who is also a minister, will have a total of RM1 million to be disbursed.

The Government had also approved of a RM100,000 allocation for each senator, to carry out small development projects during their three-year term.

The disbursement of the allocation will be coordinated by the Implementation Coordination Unit under the Prime Minister's Department.

"The allocation is given to the senators as they work closely with the rakyat and receive many applications from them to develop various development projects," Annuar said.

On the RM220 million allocation for rural projects given under the National Recovery Plan, Annuar said the ministry has no problems disbursing the grant.

"The allocation is meant for projects which had previously been postponed due to a shortage of funds. This is simply to give back what had earlier been approved," he said.

(END)