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DPM: Carry out all approved projects on schedule

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KEPALA BATAS, Sat. - All development projects that have been approved, especially those in rural areas, must proceed without delay and be completed next year, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said in order to ensure their smooth implementation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had appointed him to chair the newly set up Rural Development Action Committee.

"Dr Mahathir takes a very serious view of the need to ensure smooth implementation of all development projects, especially those in the rural areas so that we do not neglect the needs of the people in the villages.

"I will call for a meeting of the action committee soon," he said when met at a jamuan air nira in Kampung Rantau Panjang last night. (Air nira is a beverage made from coconut shoots).

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister and Kepala Batas MP, said the Government wanted to enter the new millennium on a positive note.

"We want the people, especially those in the rural areas, to live more comfortably. The Government will never neglect the villagers because they are also entitled to enjoy the benefits of development programmes."

Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said recently that a development allocation of more than RM4 billion was not utilised last year due to delays in the implementation of projects.

This accounted for between 20 and 25 per cent of the Government's total allocation of RM21.3 billion.

Meanwhile, Abdullah also urged the people to continue to give their full support to efforts by the Government to improve the economy.

"From my observation, our efforts are paying off. For example, take a look at the current fasting month. There are always leftovers each time after the breaking of fast at the mosques.

"This suggests that the people, especially in the villages, are hardly affected by the economic crisis and that the Government's actions in checking the problem are working effectively," he said.

Another positive indicator, Abdullah noted, was that about 80,000 people had performed the umrah (minor Haj) during the fasting month.

This, he said, showed that the people still had lots of money, especially among Felda settlers since they were enjoying high palm oil prices. "Malaysia is very lucky in facing many problems. Let's work together to ensure continued peace and prosperity."

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