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Fortnightly reports on projects (HL)

Rashid Yusof

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - In ensuring speedy completion of Government projects ranging from rural roads and bridges to low-cost houses, State Governments, ministries and agencies are now required to submit fortnightly progress reports.

They are to be handed over to the Implementation and Co-ordination Unit in the Prime Minister's Department.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today this new requirement would give the Government up-to-date data on project implementation.

"These projects are meant for the people and we don't want any unnecessary delays or bureaucratic hassle," he told reporters after launching Putra Permai Township's information technology centre and home page in Seri Kembangan here.

He said the National Economic Action Council, too, would monitor the progress rate.

He added that the NEAC chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has the capacity to scrutinise the fortnightly progress reports as it meets daily.

Abdullah had said in January that the Government wanted development projects meant to improve livelihood of the people to be implemented without delay and that a committee headed by him had been formed for the purpose.

On housing, he said the NEAC decided today that the building of low and medium-cost homes should be further expedited.

In his speech, Abdullah said the Government had allocated an additional RM600 million for public low-cost housing, which highlighted the continued emphasis on the well-being of the poor and low-income earners.

He said 35,000 units of low-cost homes would be built as part of a squatter relocation programme and 15,000 more for the hardcore poor in rural areas.

Overall, 90,032 units or 45 per cent of the targeted number of low-cost houses have been completed with the public sector contributing 26,774 units.

He said with the establishment of the Syarikat Perumahan Negara Berhad (SPNB) in 1997 with a RM2-billion revolving capital, more houses costing RM150,000 and below would be built.

As at last October, SPNB had approved RM733 million in bridging loans to build 50,725 units of homes of which 13,644 units were low-cost, 13,482 units medium-low and 35,599 units medium cost, he added.

As for Putra Permai, it offers 1,500 units of low and medium-cost houses which will be completed 10 months ahead of schedule.

Abdullah alluded to the sale of 90 per cent of the homes so far, saying this was a sign that the economy was recovering.

"The people retain the purchasing power although we have been hit by an economic crisis for almost two years," he said.

At the same time, banks are still unable to fund housing projects while the developers have the capability to complete them ahead of schedule, Abdullah added.

Last Saturday, First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin had hit out at irresponsible housing developers who look to quick profit gains instead of improving the quality of life.

"I hope Malaysians wake up and be vocal about irresponsible housing developers," Daim said.

Daim added that housing developers should not shirk from their responsibility to the people. "Consumers should boycott developers who cheat and those who cheat should be punished," he added.

In Ipoh, Abdullah called on Government departments and statutory bodies to make prompt payments to contractors who have completed their jobs.

He said these contactors needed the money as they had other obligations to fulfil.

"Payments must be made as soon as possible after the work have been completed. If not, there will be speculation why cheques were not issued when there are allocations," he told reporters after a 45-minute meeting with State, Federal and statutory department heads at the State Operations Room in Bangunan Perak this evening.

Also present was Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib.

Abdullah said such accusations would be bad for the image of the officers concerned and the Government.

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