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Keep tabs on projects, Cabinet members told

Sarban Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Underlining the Government's seriousness in speeding up the implementation of development projects, all Ministers have been ordered to attend the twice-a-week meetings with their senior officials to discuss progress of these projects.

The order was issued at the Cabinet meeting yesterday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Prime Minister wanted immediate decisions and solutions to be made to address any shortcomings.

"The Prime Minister said it is compulsory for Ministers and their secretaries-general to attend these meetings."

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after a two-hour dialogue with about 500 Administrative and Diplomatic Officers at Intan. Also present were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, Public Service Department director-general Datuk Samsudin Oman, directors-general and senior officers.

Abdullah was asked to comment on a report in Berita Harian today quoting Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed saying that some Ministers and secretaries-general were lax in monitoring the progress of development projects.

They were also blamed for not spending allocations meant for projects which had been approved.

"Ministers and secretaries-general are not hands-on concerning the development of projects undertaken by their ministries. Because of that, the National Economic Action Council has proposed that the projects be monitored.

"The Cabinet has also directed Ministers to be more efficient in delegating tasks and monitoring their progress," Mustapa was reported to have said.

Abdullah said it was important that Ministers had first-hand information of the progress of the projects as this would enable them to take remedial action if there were any shortcomings.

"If the Ministers are not present, immediate decisions cannot be made. This will only cause unnecessary delays."

Abdullah said he had also reminded the officers during the dialogue that they must carry out all instructions made by the Government or the National Economic Action Council diligently and with dedication.

"Any decision made by the NEAC exco must be carried out promptly. We have to note that the Government is doing its best to revitalise the economy and we need the co-operation of all to ensure its recovery."

Citing an example, Abdullah said these officers must submit the relevant reports to the Implementation and Coordination Unit as directed by the administration. "I also told them that they were free to give their views and opinions for the betterment of the economy or on ways to reduce red tape."

Abdullah said he had also suggested that government agencies such as Intan, the Economic Planning Unit and the ICU compiled reports and information on efforts taken by the authorities to overcome racial problems (May 1969), the recession and the exchange rate controls.

"All policies and approaches taken to address these issues must be compiled so that new officers or those who join the service will be able

to refer to them.

"This will enable them to comprehend things better and solve such issues."

Asked to comment on the RM195 million new Royal Malaysian Navy base in Tanjung Pengelih, Johor, which had been shoddily built, Abdullah promised that action would be taken against the contractor if there were any impropriety.

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