

25 MAR 2001

Palanivel-Estates

HELP RAISE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WORKERS, SAYS PALANIVEL

PETALING JAYA, March 25 (Bernama) -- Small estate owners must work hand-in-hand with the government and assume a more meaningful and effective role in uplifting the socio-economic status of their workers, Rural Development Deputy Minister Datuk G. Palanivel said today.

"The government is doing all it can to bring about changes at these estates but estate owners themselves should do more to uplift the status of their workers," he said.

He said the government through various ministries provided basic amenities, infrastructure and other facilities for the benefit of workers through a RM100 million government grant allocated solely for the upgrading of the estate sector.

"But small estate owners should be receptive and come forward to provide information if there is a need for something...it is very disheartening to note that some owners are not even bothered to bring about changes for the betterment of their workers," he told reporters after opening the MIC Selangor Wanita 16th Annual Convention, here.

Palanivel, who is also MIC vice-president and MIC Selangor chairman, said the ministry sometimes could not get the cooperation of small estate owners to even provide land for social projects like reading rooms and recreation centres.

"They just refuse to cooperate...even asking them (small estate owners) to identify the hardcore poor is too difficult for them (to do)," he added.

He said estate owners stood to benefit as productivity would improve if the status of the estate community was alleviated.

Palanivel also said although the government was not making it mandatory for estate owners to cooperate, they should do it on their own accord.

Meanwhile, the Selangor MIC Wanita head, Komala Krishna Moorthy, said the state wanita wing would launch a programme called "Out-Reach", targetted at secondary school girls and female factory workers.

"We intend to hold seminars for them, in small batches, to find out the problems they face and draw-up an action plan to tackle their woes," she said.

She said the wanita wing has already written to the newly formed Women and Family Development Ministry to inform its minister, Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil of their intention.

"We will also need assistance from the ministry to solve the problems faced by this group (schoolgirls and female factory workers)," she added.

At the convention today, the MIC Selangor Wanita tabled and passed six resolutions, two of which was to show undivided support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

Other resolutions include urging the government to actively promote national unity, to provide more low cost houses irrespective of race, to upgrade Tamil schools and equip them with more computers.

-- BERNAMA

SR ES DVS