

28/10/2001

`Fruits of development will be shared by all'

KENINGAU, Sat. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has assured an equitable distribution of development funds between urban and rural areas.

Speaking at the opening of an open market here today, he said it was the Government's objective to ensure that all segments of the community benefited from the fruits of development.

Development would not be restricted only in major towns or cities because the petty traders from the rural areas also played important roles in the country's progress, he said.

Abdullah said this was asserted in the strategic approach announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when tabling the Budget 2002 on Oct 19.

"A large allocation of RM5 billion was given for rural development in the Budget."

The allocation would be used for improving infrastructural facilities, such as roads, treated water and electricity supply in the rural areas.

Creating economic activities for the rural community would also be given priority by the Government.

"We don't want to see only major areas such as Kuala Lumpur or Kota Kinabalu progress, while others are left behind," Abdullah said.

He noted the Government's earlier promise to provide water and electricity supply to all schools in Sabah and Sarawak.

He assured that the Government was looking towards providing basic amenities and education to rural towns and villages.

Abdullah later launched the newly-formed Sabah Interior Development Foundation (SIDF) headed by Entrepreneur Development Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Datuk Rizalman Abdullah.

He also officiated at the opening of SIDF's office at the town centre here.

SIDF's main objective is to improve the livelihood of the communities in the interior regions of Sabah.

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