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`Approach has to be hands-on'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Ministers, Menteris Besar, elected representatives and government servants at all levels have been directed to adopt a hands-on approach and go down to the ground to monitor the progress of projects, including rural development and poverty eradication programmes.

National Economic Action Council executive director Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad issued the directive at a meeting of the NEAC last Tuesday.

"It's vital that it has to be hands-on, (and) as far as possible, all progress reports should have photographs to prove the earnestness of those implementing and monitoring projects," he said in an interview with Bernama.

It was essential that the distribution of projects be effective and the selection of targeted recipients and identification of sites be improved.

"I feel that it is more appropriate for Village Security and Development Committees (JKKK) to be entrusted with the responsibility of determining the recipients, the sites and the type of projects to be implemented. This is because the JKKKs know the needs of the people in their jurisdiction better."

Mustapa said he had received several complaints from the grassroots over the delay of projects in their areas. Such delays should not occur because planning should have been done earlier for projects under the five-year plan.

"The Prime Minister also takes a serious view of this problem and recently directed ministries and government agencies to plan a year earlier for the implementation of projects. For instance, for the construction of schools, the sites should be identified a year earlier."

This would ensure the projects were implemented according to schedule without having to wait for the Budget announcement. The Government no longer wishes to see ministries and agencies waiting for the Budget to plan projects.

On the poverty eradication programme which became an issue following the Auditor-General's report, Mustapa said the report showed shortcomings in the programme, now known as programme for the people's well-being.

Among other things, it involves the construction of houses and the providing of economic assistance, loans, and supplementary food for very poor families.

"We have to admit that the programme to assist the very poor in Malaysia is the most successful in the world. Even though there are weaknesses, the government has initiated measures from time to time to overcome them."

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