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Azmi-Poor

POOR AID CENTRES FOR BIG TOWNS

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KUALA LUMPUR, April 1 (Bernama) -- Efforts to fight poverty will be expanded to big towns in the country with the setting up of "Compassion Centres" or "Pusat Rahmat" to help the poor, Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid said today.

One such centre set up on a pilot basis at Wisma PKNS in Jalan Raja Laut here in October 1999 had received encouraging response, he said.

Last year another such centre was set up in Melaka and was called "Caring Centre" or "Pusat Pembela".

"The government will set up these centres in big towns in the country this year....we have to tackle this poverty problem," he told Bernama in an interview.

Yesterday Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Barisan Nasional (BN) would focus more attention on the poor in both the urban and rural areas through close cooperation among the BN elected representatives and the communities.

Azmi said his ministry would redouble its efforts to eradicate poverty in the urban areas by getting close to target groups -- the poor families and individuals.

Apart from providing advisory service to the poor folks on ways of improving their standard of life, the compassion centres would also help them to set up small businesses, he said.

The ministry would also step up poverty eradication efforts in the rural areas by encouraging the rural society to participate in economic activities, he added.

Meanwhile opening a kindergarten at Taman Beseri Jaya in Beseri near Kangar, Azmi said the government had proposed RM13.2 billion under the Eighth Malaysia Plan for poverty eradication programmes.

Of the amount RM5 billion had been proposed for the Rural Development Ministry, he said.

The various ministries would cooperate in poverty eradication efforts in the country, he added.

These poverty eradication programmes would cover all communities in the country so that citizens would be able to enjoy a better standard of living, he said.

He stressed the importance of harmonious living and unity among the various races so that economic activities could be undertaken successfully.

-- BERNAMA

RIS AAM