

19 OCT 2001
Budget-Caring
RM6.3 BILLION FOR HEALTH SERVICES

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- The government has allocated RM6.3 billion to the Health Ministry in the 2002 Budget to continue, among others, the implementation of hospitals and health and rural clinic projects.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in tabling the budget in the Dewan Rakyat today, said that among the medical and health facilities, focus would be given to improving women and children's health, disease control, nutrition as well as providing modern equipment and facilities.

A total of RM1.08 billion was provided for the construction of quarters including RM710 million for the armed forces, RM197 million for the police and RM173 million for civil servants.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said that in the spirit of a caring society, RM204.5 million was allocated for the poor with priority given to states with the highest number of poor, including Kelantan and Terengganu.

The allocation would be channelled through the Rural Development Ministry for the people's wellbeing programme which would replace the hardcore poor development programme.

"These include programmes to motivate poor families, augment their income, provide supplementary food for the hardcore poor, eradicate urban poverty, improve agriculture and economic activities as well as for renovation of houses and community development," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was also providing RM136.5 million under the operating expenditure and RM57.3 million under the development expenditure for community welfare programmes to benefit 52 welfare institutions, including for renovations and upgrading works to improve their living conditions.

Felda, he said, would provide price support assistance for oil palm and rubber settlers faced with declining commodity prices.

Oil palm settlers would be given RM12 per tonne if the palm oil prices fell below RM900 while rubber settlers would be given 15 sen per kilogramme if the rubber prices were below R2.50.

Dr Mahathir said Risda had allocated RM3 million annually to improve the income levels of the hardcore poor, provide better living conditions and conduct programmes aimed at improving their work attitude and ethics to enable them to augment their income.

"In addition, a maximum assistance of RM250 a month has been provided for each family based on the number of dependents. A total of 667 families have benefitted from this assistance, amounting to RM2.5 million for the period July 1999 to December 2000," he said.

The government would also provide RM403,000 to help students with hearing disabilities in institutions of higher learning by providing free education, food and lodging as well as a monthly allowance of RM300 beginning Jan 1 next year.

For those who depend on returns from savings and are affected by the reduction in interest rates, Bank Negara would issue the third series of Bon Simpanan Malaysia, especially for citizens aged above 55 years and welfare organisations registered with the Registrar of Societies.

"An amount of RM1 billion will be issued with a rate of return of 5 per cent, of which half will be issued based on Islamic principles," he said.

A total of RM943 million had been allocated for several low-cost

housing projects, including RM143 million loans to the state governments to implement 125 public low-cost housing projects.

An allocation of RM793 million was also provided for the implementation of the integrated public housing programme in the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur and other areas to build houses for rent to the lower income group, Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AHH JK