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All projects under RM7.3b packages to be ready by Jan 31

M. Hamzah Jamaludin

SLIM RIVER, Thurs. - Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman is confident that all projects under the two stimulus packages valued at RM7.3 billion can be completed before Jan 31.

He said about 90 per cent of the projects throughout the country had been completed to date, while 45 per cent of the total payment had already been made to the contractors.

"We are working hard to make sure that all the projects will be completed and the payments made before the new deadline set by the Government," he said after visiting projects under the packages in Batang Padang district today.

He also said the Feb 15 deadline requested by the Perak Government was unnecessary because about 95 per cent of the 2,116 projects under the RM71 million package for the State had been completed.

The State Government had also received 72 per cent of the allocation up to Jan 8.

He said the Government had extended the deadline to Jan 31 from Jan 15 as most States could not complete their projects on time.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday said the two special packages to stimulate the country's economy were under-utilised with only 50 per cent of the fund used up.

He also said only 87 per cent of the Government's development budget of RM28.84 billion for last year was utilised due to complications in the identification of projects and red tape.

In September last year, the Government announced a RM4.3 billion stimulus package, to be spent immediately, to cushion the impact of an imminent global economic slowdown.

The new package focuses on small development projects including the upgrading of roads in rural areas.

Earlier in March, the Government had announced a similar package worth RM3 billion which focused on large infrastructure projects.

Samsudin said the Government would also adopt a better progress payment scheme which would enable contractors to get their payments after completing their jobs at certain stages. Asked whether red tape had resulted in project delays, Samsudin said problems occurred due to the wrong attitude of some Government officials.

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