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Chua-SMIs

HEALTH MINISTRY TO DEVELOP HEALTH-BASED SMIS IN VILLAGES

SEREMBAN, June 20 (Bernama) -- The Health Ministry will develop small- and medium-scale industries involving the traditional medicine and health sector in villages nationwide.

Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today that there was a need for such industries to develop the country's wealth of natural resources like plants and herbs into medicines, food and health products.

The move was also in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for each village to be identified with one product, he told reporters after opening the Negeri Sembilan branch of the National SMI Consultation Centre (Nasmic), here.

He said, for example, that Thailand had developed the traditional massage and masseurs were trained in the art because it was viewed as a good source of income for the people and medicines and cosmetic products were also developed in that country.

SMIs played an important role in a country's economic growth, he said, adding that 90 per cent of Japan's economy was supported by the SMIs which were depended on heavily by the multinationals like Sony, Matsushita and Toyota for their products.

Realising this, the Malaysian government had given special attention to the SMIs by providing them with various incentives and assistance, he said.

He added that the economic package announced by the prime minister recently had allocated RM3 billion to the SMIs with RM1 billion for the Food Fund, RM1 billion for the Micro-Credit Scheme and RM1 billion for the SMIs and New Entrepreneur Fund.

He also said that Nasmic would conduct a series of seminars starting next month to explain the package to the SMI entrepreneurs.

Earlier, in his speech, Chua urged the SMI entrepreneurs to prepare for the challenges posed by the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by ensuring that their products met the required standard, were competitive and suitable for their target market.

-- BERNAMA

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