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Zaharah-Social

NSP AIMS TO TACKLE SOCIAL WOES - DR SITI ZAHARAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- The National Social Policy (NSP) will be a key instrument to address the country's social ills in a concerted and effective way, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said today.

The policy, to be tabled at the cabinet meeting on Feb 19, would be the main policy encompassing all social development policies based on the nation's constitution, Rukunegara and Vision 2020, she said.

"The NSP will guide the implementation and management of social development so it is in tandem with the country's economic development, to produce a progressive nation," Dr Siti Zaharah said at a media conference after officiating the ministry's 2003 gathering and launching of its logo here.

She is confident the cabinet would accept the NSP, amended since 1999 and approved by the Cabinet Committee to Combat Social Problems, without any difficulties as it was refined and discussed at every stage.

"In principle we are waiting for the Cabinet's approval. All preparations to introduce NSP at the national and district level had been done and will be implemented once it is approved," said Dr Siti Zaharah.

To achieve the policy's objective, the National Social Council, chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, would be formed to coordinate and monitor its progress at all levels.

"The joint participation of the government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector is an approach to tackle the social problems in a more focused and integrated method, the target being the community," she added.

Dr Siti Zaharah said at present no concerted efforts exist to solve social woes and actions are taken by individual agencies.

But with NSP the ministry could be the prime mover, identify neglected problems or address new issues, while other agencies play a secondary role.

"We will zero in and tackle the social issues based on four approaches -- promotion, prevention, intervention and rehabilitation," she said.

Earlier in her speech, Dr Siti Zaharah said the ministry aimed to enhance work quality and services to meet challenges of globalisation, liberalisation and the information technology.

"All staff must understand the ministry's vision, mission and objective, and appreciate their roles. They must work strategically within the limited resources available. If we fail to deliver, non-governmental organisations are ready to take over the responsibilities," she said.

While stressing on the ministry's three target areas this year -- social development, national unity and children, she said staff should focus on projects with substance and sustainable programmes.

With an increased administration allocation of RM443 million, compared to last year's RM233 million, the ministry and agencies need to plan and implement programmes according to schedule to reap maximum benefits, Dr Siti Zaharah said.

"Last year our efforts did not bring much success because proposals needed approvals from the federal agencies that took plenty of time."

She hoped the new ministry's logo with the theme "Kesejahteraan Sosial Teras Perpaduan" (social harmony is pillar of unity) would boost the spirit of the staff.

She advised them to enhance their social skills and knowledge,

especially in globalisation and terrorism -- two areas that contribute to social problems which could hamper the competitiveness of a country.

-- BERNAMA

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