

'Don't question BN's commitment to rural areas'
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The BN government's commitment to bring more infrastructure projects into the rural areas should not be questioned or doubted, Deputy Information Communication and Culture Minister Joseph Salang said.

The government was aware that projects like roads would go a long way in upgrading people's quality of life, he said at a meet-the-people session after launching a 1Malaysia Reading Promotion Campaign at Rh Ijam longhouse in Julau, Sarawak last night.

Meanwhile, he said the government had given its approval for the much-awaited Nanga Entabai-Rantau Limau road here.

"It has always been a priority project for me," he said, adding that he had met leaders including Prime Minister Najib Razak over the project.

"I am now glad to announce that the government has set aside about RM103 million for the project which should begin by the first quarter of this year," he said.

Salang regretted that many lies and unhealthy insinuations were made against the project.

He also reminded the rural people against joining those trying to for branches of opposition parties.

"Please ponder and decide carefully... joining such parties will serve you no purpose.

"The Parti Keadilan Rakyat, for instance, may be a big national opposition party but its leadership is chaotic and ineffective and we often hear of frustrated members leaving it," he said.

Malaysians read more now

Meanwhile, Salang said there had been a slight increase of 1.3 percent in the number of Malaysians taking up reading last year, with 56,676 having registered as members of their local libraries.

According to statistics from the National Library, 776,347 books were borrowed during the period, an increase of 9.5 percent over 2009.

"Malaysians, especially those in urban areas are generally on the road to acquiring the reading habit.

"Those in rural areas should follow suit to ensure they will not be left behind in the chase for more and current knowledge and information," he said.

Salang said it was very important that people made a life-long habit out of reading so that the government's intention to narrow the information gap between the rural and urban areas could be realised.

Later when speaking at a press conference, he said, he would strive to set up more WiFi villages to complement efforts by the National Library for an educated and well-informed Malaysian society.

He also advised people who borrow books from libraries to return them as schedule so that others could borrow them.

"We are glad to note that the number of delinquent borrowers ... those who failed to return books as scheduled, are not many. Borrowing books is an exercise in personal discipline," he said.

Salang also handed over special assistance totalling RM100,000 from his ministry to more than 20 religious and social organisations from the Julau and Pakan districts.

- Bernama

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