

**Sarawak Optimistic RM1 Billion Special Fund Includes State's Rural Schools**  
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KUCHING, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Sarawak is optimistic that the RM1 billion special fund for the construction, improvement and maintenance of schools provided in the 2012 Budget will include dilapidated rural schools in the state, Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah said Monday.

She said many of such schools, especially national-type Chinese schools that were built during the early years of Sarawak's independence within Malaysia, were a run-down, while the teachers' living quarters were often a sorry sight.

"We are looking forward to the implementation of the special allocation as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak according to the needs," she told reporters after receiving donations of 43 water tanks worth RM30,000 from Weida Resources Sdn Bhd for her Dalat constituency here.

The Health Ministry had identified 2,209 schools with severely damaged hostels, teacher's houses and building that were expected to be remedied by the end of next year.

Fatimah was also confident that the opening of additional trunk roads in the state would provide access, especially to the many scattered longhouses in her area, as well as facilitating the provision of electricity and water supplies and generate economic activities.

Even though most longhouses were situated at least 20km from the main road, she said, the people preferred to travel by land, a cheaper option compared to river transportation, which also had to depend on the tides.

"The construction of these rural roads, which will be implemented in stages under the 10th Malaysia Plan, is costly with one kilometre of road alone costing about RM1 million," she said, adding that a 4km-stretch was being built this year in Dalat from 3km last year.

She hoped that the Rural and Regional Development Ministry would achieve its target to provide clean water supply as almost 100 per cent of the longhouses and kampungs in Dalat had to depend on the rain harvest system to obtain water.

On the donations, she said a 7,000-litre water tank would be placed at the haemodialysis centre at Dalat hospital, which would be operational by Oct 18.

The remaining 1,800-litre water tanks would be distributed to 66 longhouses and kampungs in the Dalat and Mukah districts, SJK San San in Narub, Dalat and Pekan Sabtu Nelayan at the Oya old ferry terminal, she said.

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