

Najib announces rural change scheme, RM50m grant
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PUTRAJAYA, Sept 22 — The government will soon launch the Rural Transformation Programme (RTP) to spur economic development in rural areas, starting with a multi-million ringgit distribution centre in Gopeng, Perak.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the Rural Transformation Centre (RTC) will help small-scale rural entrepreneurs forge better links with the market in order to boost demand for their products.

“It will be used as an agro-food and agro-business supply centre that will connect suppliers with consumers,” he told some 2,000 entrepreneurs and their families here.

Najib also announced an early allocation of RM50 million to some 10,000 rural businesses under the Usahawan Kecil Dinamik (Dynamic Small Entrepreneurs) programme that will be administered by Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara).

He added that there were other RTP programmes in the pipeline but said he would only announce them at the upcoming Budget 2012 next month.

Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal later told reporters that, in addition to helping entrepreneurs reach a wider market, the RTC will also be a one-stop centre for business financing and training.

“We have provided kiosks kitted out by the Rural Development Ministry with all the information entrepreneurs need,” he said.

“The kiosk is a place where you can have access to all sorts of information, with regards to how to get loans and training.”

Shafie said the centre, which will service rural businesses within a 100km radius, will be ready in “two of three months”, adding that his ministry had already identified at least four other locations for future RTCs, including in East Malaysia.

The RTP is a cross-ministry effort to drive economic development in rural areas that also involves the agriculture and agro-business, health, education, home affairs and defence ministries.

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