

**RM743 Million Allocated To Build Roads in Rural Areas of Sarawak – Zahid  
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MIRI, April 29 (Bernama) -- The government has allocated RM743 million for the construction of roads in the rural areas of Sarawak under the Armed Forces Jiwa Murni programme said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the projects to build roads over a distance of 1,223km would be carried out by the Armed Forces engineering unit.

"Projects carried out will be either upgrading former logging tracks into paved gravel roads or build new roads to improve connectivity or connect existing roads to interior parts on long houses," he told reporters after launching a Jiwa Murni Project to upgrade the road at the Sepupuk settlement scheme in Niah, about 80km from here today.

Ahmad Zahid said the RM743 million allocation was approved by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and channeled through the Defence Ministry and Rural and Regional Development Ministry but did not state when the project would start or the duration of the project.

"What is important is that the people of Sarawak, especially those in rural and interior areas, are able to enjoy cheaper goods due to the availability of proper transportation infrastructure.

"In the past the cost of a gas cylinder was about RM50 but now it is between RM24 and RM28. When transportation cost is reduced, the prices of goods are also reduced," he said.

"With proper roads built through the Jiwa Murni programme, the people are able to reduce their travel time from 10 to 20 hours or even days because some will have to walk to their destinations, use heavy vehicles or motorcycles.

"However, with roads available, their children can drive home in their own cars or vehicles during the festive season like Christmas, New Year etc. in a few hours instead," he said adding that the Jiwa Murni Projects had started in 2009.

Ahmad Zahid said by using the expertise of the Armed Forces, the government is able to reduce the construction cost compared to engaging other parties.

"According to the Public Works Department's estimation, the cost for each kilometre is RM6 million but Armed Forces can do it at a cost of RM2 million a kilometre. The government can save RM4 million a kilometre and the job can be done quicker," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said the Rural and Regional Development Ministry had also approved a project to supply water to the Bekenu constituency through an allocation of RM94.5 million and another RM1.5 million to build houses for the hardcore poor under the Hardcore Poor Housing project.

In Sepupuk, upgrading works on an 18km stretch of road had started on April 13, 2016 and expected

to be completed on April 12, 2017, under the Jiwa Murni programme using a new approach at a cost of RM35.5 million and benefit about 4,000 residents.

Ahmad Zahid said the Rural and Regional Development Ministry had also allocated RM200 million to upgrade or build new roads in Sarawak.

"That is why the people need to retain BN in power because the BN does not give empty promises but approves allocations for project even before going to the polls.

"Imagine when BN wins the election. Certainly there will be more," he said.

Also present were Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, Armed Forces chief Tan Sri Zulkifeli Mohd Zin and BN candidate for Bekenu, Rosey Yunus.

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