

**Jabu Requests, DPM Says 'Yes' For Bario**  
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KUCHING, May 3 (Bernama) -- Although he is not contesting in the 11th state polls, Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu Numpang is equally busy campaigning not only for Barisan Nasional but also for the state's development.

He certainly did not let go of the opportunity to discuss issues of progress and "more allocation" for rural areas with federal leaders who have descended on the Land of the Hornbills in conjunction with the Sarawak state election.

At the opening ceremony of the Home Ministry's Bario Micro Office by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Jabu in his speech requested for a rural transformation centre (RTC) to be set up in the area.

He said the facility would enable residents on the highland located northeast of Sarawak to receive government and private services conveniently considering the long journey to the nearest town, or to Miri by land which takes 15 hours.

Jabu, who is also PBB deputy president also requested for an allocation of at least RM1.5 million to upgrade a number of dirt roads which had hindered movement for the villagers comprising mainly of the Kelabit indigenous minority.

Ahmad Zahid approved the requests, announcing that the ministry's micro office would be upgraded to an RTC, and RM2 million to upgrade the roads.

As soon as the deputy prime minister mentioned the allocation, Jabu went up to him and gave him a hug while he was still delivering his speech.

Meanwhile, Jabu in his address also noted that the government had provided various facilities for the rural community such as electricity and water supply, but that other aspects of development were still wanting, such as education.

Children in the rural areas including in Bario, he said, are intelligent and diligent.

"They study hard, they work hard and also they are clever. The quality of our rural people is sometimes equal if not better than the urban people. We believe in that...give us the opportunity," he said.

He cited former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Idris Jala who had also served as Malaysia Airlines CEO and managing director, as among Bario's 'children' who proved that village kids are just as smart.

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