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MOF conduct field visits to prepare for 2021 budget – Shahar

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SERIAN, July 11 – Deputy Finance Minister II Mohd Shahar Abdullah ‘went down to the ground’ and personally witnessed several Federal government projects and initiatives in Sarawak to understand the needs and impact on the community in preparation for the 2021 Budget.

During his four-day working visit to the state starting last Wednesday, Shahar said he and his team came here to see for themselves whether the implementation of the project through the allocation channeled by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to the other ministries met the purpose of the applications.

"Yesterday, I had the opportunity to see the process of fulfilling the Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH) and Bantuan Prihatin Nasional (BPN) in Betong, about a five hours drive from Kuching, and on the way home, we were able to journey on the Pan Borneo Highway and see the work performance progress along the route.

"Today is linked to the implementation of the dilapidated school projects through two sources, the first through the 11th Malaysia Plan and the second, the RM1 billion Dilapidated School Development Project," he said at a press conference after visiting SMK Tebakang in Serian today.

Commenting further, he said, the MOF visit was not to evaluate and monitor because it was not the job of his ministry, MOF just wanted to understand matters that had been outlined by the ministry in preparation to face the 2021 Budget and the 12th Malaysia Plan.

"The MOF should be able to understand more clearly. Not only sit in Putrajaya and be briefed but we come down to see what is happening at the grassroots level, "he said.

On the development of the RM1 billion Dilapidated School Development Project, Shahar said, despite facing various challenges such as the change of the federal government and the Movement Control Order, the Sarawak Public Works Department (PWD) had given its commitment to speed up the project.

"For the MOF, what is important is not the value of the building that will be upgraded or rebuilt but the impact on all the students and the local community who will receive the benefits that should be given priority," he said.

The first phase of the Dilapidated School Development Project, using a special allocation of RM1 billion through negotiations between the Sarawak government and the previous federal government, went smoothly with 41 schools already under construction.

Meanwhile, another 52 schools were listed in the second phase and were in the pre-tender process while the third phase was being finalised.

The Sarawak PWD is the implementing agency appointed by the Ministry of Education for the project, while the Malaysian PWD monitors the project.

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