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05 MAY, 2026

Zahid: Rural folk must see tangible gains from programmes

New Straits Times, Malaysia

GAUGING SUCCESS

Zahid: Rural folk must see tangible gains from programmes

PUTRAJAYA: Rural Malaysians must feel the impact of every ringgit spent, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told the Rural and Regional Development Ministry.

Speaking at the ministry's monthly assembly, Zahid, who is also its minister, said success must no longer be measured by programmes launched or funds spent, but by tangible improvements in rural Malaysians' lives.

"True success is when the people feel the change in their lives. We have been entrusted with RM12.4 billion under the 2026 Budget, this is not just a figure, it is a mandate from the people."

While national indicators such as the International Monetary Fund's revised GDP growth projection of 4.7 per cent and a strengthening ringgit were encouraging, Zahid said the bigger question remained whether that prosperity was reaching villagers.

Zahid has introduced the National Rural Economy framework, positioning rural areas as primary growth engines rather than mere support zones.

He cited palm-based biodiesel as a prime example of untapped potential, urging Felcra, Ketengah and Kesedar to act on it seriously.

He also called for a shift away from subsidy dependence.

"If we only hand out subsidies without fixing market structures, rural folk will remain dependent. We must move from helping to building systems, from subsidies to ecosystems, from programmes to markets."

Speaking to reporters later, Zahid said smallholders will not be sidelined despite ministry budget cuts of at least RM250 million.

He said that instead of total elimination, programmes demonstrating weaker returns would be scaled back to ensure efficiency.

"We are not eliminating aid; we are rationalising it. Explanations will be provided to each target group to ensure they understand the adjustments."

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SUMMARIES

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PUTRAJAYA: Rural Malaysians must feel the impact of every ringgit spent, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told the Rural and Regional Development Ministry. Speaking at the ministry's monthly assembly, Zahid, who is also its minister, said success must no longer be measured by programmes launched or funds spent, but by tangible improvements in rural Malaysians' lives. "True success is when the people feel the change in their lives.

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