

Ko-Nelayan told to help poor fishermen

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AGRICULTURE and Food Industry Minister Datuk Haji Abdul Rahim Ismail on Friday reminded the Fishermen Development Corporation (Ko-Nelayan) to judiciously implement projects meant to uplift the living standard of hardcore poor fishermen.

"You have been given the responsibility to get them out of that stagnancy, therefore utilise the funds entrusted you, timely," he stressed, before witnessing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and Ko-Nelayan.

The Federal Government has allocated RM20 million to the fisheries sub-sector for the eradication of poverty among fishermen, in line with its '0' incidence target by 2010 under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

According to the statistics issued by the Rural and Regional Development Ministry, about 1,500 of the 20,000 fisherman in Sabah are hardcore poor fishermen.

Acknowledging Ko-Nelayan's capability, Rahim noted that it used to be an ailing agency but was now thriving and out of the red, thanks to a bold restructuring move.

On the MoU, he indicated its significance for the fact, among others, that Sabah has a major role in contributing to the country's aquaculture industry considering its fishery resource potential had yet to be fully exploited.

Additionally, Sabah has been identified to have the largest area, some 182,260 hectares or 37 percent in the country suitable for aquaculture.

"The State Government is in the process of gazetting 63,342 hectares of land and sea as an Aquaculture Industrial Zone (ZIA).

In this context, the involvement of higher learning institutions (such as UMS) and the private sector is of utmost importance to partner such endeavour into reality."— EM