

RM100mil set aside to spur CSR efforts by private firms

TO PROMOTE corporate social responsibility (CSR), the Government has called on the private sector to contribute to the Amal Jariah programme and has offered to provide a matching grant for each contribution.

A RM100mil initial allocation has been made for this purpose.

The Amal Jariah programme, to repair homes of the hardcore poor, was launched last year with a fund of RM50mil.

To date, 4,600 houses have been repaired at an estimated cost of RM24mil. For 2008, a total of 8,400 houses will be repaired. In 2009, the aim is to repair 30,000 dilapidated houses.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsudin Bardan said all CSR measures should be on a "voluntary basis".

"However, not many private companies are aware or familiar with the Amal Jariah programme."

To boost the CSR culture, the Government has also proposed that the scope of community projects eligible for tax deduction be extended to include those that will enhance the income of the poor, as well as conservation and preservation of the environment.

In addition, the Government has proposed that the deduction limit be increased from 7% to 10% of the aggregate income for companies contributing to charitable institutions.

"I think the Government should also be more specific as to whether this Amal Jariah programme is considered a charitable organisation, so companies know if they can qualify for the tax deduction," Shamsudin said.

For the disabled community, the Government will now extend a RM150 monthly allowance to those who are unemployed. Currently, only the working disabled are given an allowance of RM300 a month.

Disabled students in special education schools will also have their allowance increased from RM50 to RM150, while teaching assistants in these schools will be given an incentive payment of RM200 a month.