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Tue, Oct 27 2009 - DISCUSSIONS on how various ministries can best address urban poverty kicked off yesterday ♦ days after the issue was given focus in the 2010 Budget proposal.

Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin confirmed other departments and ministries are being recruited to better address the matter.

Speaking to Malay Mail, Raja Nong Chik said: ♦We are not only recruiting the Welfare Department and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. We are also planning to work together with ministries like the Housing and Local Government Ministry, Prime Minister♦s Department and other departments related to the public.♦

He said the first meeting focused on the guidelines on those who are eligible for financial assistance.

♦If things go well, we♦ll be presenting the guidelines and the criteria for eligible families to receive aid this Friday to the Cabinet. Of course it will take some time for the exercise to be implemented, as apart from having to study the situations and circumstances, we need to make sure that we cover all aspects.

♦We are also gathering information as we don♦t want to simply implement the plan, only to realise that changes need to be done afterward as we are liaising with many departments.

♦We also don♦t want problems with overlapping of duties. If one department is doing a great job, why should the Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Ministry interfere?♦ he said.

Meanwhile, Social Welfare Malaysia director-general, Datuk Meme Zainal Rashid confirmed the department would be giving its cooperation, especially when there are those who need financial assistance from the department. border="0" hspace="5" vspace="5" width="197" height="314" align="right" />

♦We will help out those with household incomes below RM720 per month who are eligible for various welfare schemes. Our eligibility income of RM720 follows the national poverty line income set by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU). Social support includes providing affordable childcare centres, and aiding families and older persons in the communities.

♦We♦ll work together to provide social support programmes to the urban poor, their families and children who are at risk of getting involved in social problems. These can be held at high density low-costs flats, where intervention programmes can be organised to provide emotional support and other help for them to cope with living in KL. All these must be done in collaboration with the FT Ministry, City Hall and related agencies.♦

Asked to comment on the eligibility criteria, Raja Nong Chik explained: ♦If a normal family of two earn a monthly income of RM3,000, they wouldn♦t be eligible to be financially assisted by us.

♦But, it♦s different if one is sick and needs constant medical care and so on. This new exercise is specifically for families who can♦t afford to put food on the table. There are a lot of factors that we need to consider.♦
