

BANGI: The Rural and Regional Development Ministry will build 5,692 houses and repair 3,454 others this year, minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said yesterday.

Shafie said from January until May 27, the ministry built 548 houses and repaired 531 houses across the country.

He said the work would be carried out using the RM300 million allocated to the ministry.

"The cabinet has decided to place more emphasis on restoration rather than the construction of new houses.

"By repairing instead of building new houses, we can reach out to more people because the allocated funds are limited."

Shafie said the decision would benefit rural folk, as many houses in rural areas were in dire need of repair.

Restoration works included roof and drainage repairs, structural reinforcement and repainting. Each house is allocated RM12,000.

Of the 5,692 houses, 1,618 are in the peninsula, 2,345 in Sabah and the rest in Sarawak.

A total of 918 houses in the peninsula will be repaired, while 449 and 2,087 will be restored in Sabah and Sarawak respectively.

Shafie added that the government was stepping up efforts to enable more Orang Asli to be employed in the public and private sectors.

He said 1,305 Orang Asli nationwide had been employed in the public sector so far.

"Almost 80 of them hold professional and managerial positions within various ministries and departments."

The Orang Asli Development Department is working towards getting more Orang Asli involved in mainstream industries