

## RTC Gopeng Pioneers Rural Transformation

By Nurul Halawati Azhari

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Those living in the outskirts within 100 km from Gopeng no longer need to travel to major towns to seek the services of government agencies or to look for opportunities to enhance their income, seek employment, entrepreneurial skills, etc.

All these can be done under a single roof through the Rural Transformation Centre (RTC) in Gopeng, in operations since mid-2011 but set to be officially launched on Feb 18.

RTC is not only an important avenue in facilitating dealings with government agencies but also serves as an integrated services centre encompassing the collection, processing and the distribution of agricultural products, banking and insurance, business consulting services, skills training, healthcare and retail space.

According to Datuk Ibrahim Mohamad, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KKLW), RTC Gopeng benefit people living within the 100km radius from the centre.

Among the Federal agencies providing their services at RTC Gopeng are the Road Transport Department (JPJ), Immigration, National Registration Department (JPN), YAPEIM, Yayasan Tekun, Pos Malaysia, Health Clinic and Agro Bank.

The centre also offers the services from the private sector, including Kontena Nasional, which offers logistic services marketing rural products, and DURIA which processes products made from durian. It is also a place for families; KFC Holdings and Mydin have outlets there.

### EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

RTC is a mechanism under the Rural Transformation Programme, with KKLW and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries (MOA) spearheading RTC throughout the nation.

In addition to RTC Gopeng, the pioneering centre, RTC Kota Baharu in Kelantan has also started operations. RTCs will be expanded with the addition of another four to be opened in Kuala Kedah (Kedah), Kuala Linggi (Melaka), Tanjung Manis (Sarawak) and Pekan Nanas (Johor).

Ibrahim told Bernama that RTCs do not involve new infrastructure and instead utilise buildings belonging to MOA.

"However, not all RTCs will be offering the same services. The services offered depend on the location and their suitability," explained Ibrahim.

### RTC'S MAIN INITIATIVE

RTC is implemented through eight initiatives - skills training for rural people; setting up of the 1Malaysia information kiosks; encouraging value added agriculture; processing of agro foods; managing the agricultural-output supply chain; providing financing facility for rural dwellers; food safety and pharmaceutical services; and the cooperation of higher education institutions.

All information on these initiatives is available at the five information kiosks and at the centre.

The 1Malaysia information kiosk, for example, serves as a one-stop portal for those who seek information on various ministries and agencies.

There are also KKLW kiosks that display the Infodesa information page, along with the information on the agencies

under KKLW, while Kiosk Jobs Malaysia will help both job seekers and employers.

The Agricultural-Food Business Development Kiosk allows the public to access information on agricultural food business development.

The 1Malaysia Smart Consumer Portal allows consumers to discuss consumer issues in an interactive forum - such as the current price forum, Pricewatch, and the consumer SMS application service.

Visitors also can seek information on numerous government departments through the MyEG kiosk.

## TRAINING AND EXPERTISE

As the implementer of RTC, KKLW has opened the avenue for the rural dwellers to seek continuous training opportunities at the RTC centres that in the long term will help them improve their economic standing.

Among the training provided are entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial motivation, packing and branding, product presentation, managing animal feed, fertigation techniques, air-conditioning repair and welding skills.

"These training programmes will be supervised by Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). Last year 15 skills training courses were conducted at RTC Gopeng," said Ibrahim.

## COME FOR THE LAUNCH

The RTC programme will be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on 18 Feb. A turnout of 30,000 is expected at the centre in Gopeng.

The public are invited to the festivities during the launch to be held from 16-19 Feb. Numerous exhibitions have been lined up at the RTC relating to public agencies, employment opportunities, product and services demonstration conducted by numerous agencies.

Ibrahim hopes that the rural dwellers will capitalise on the services provided by the RTCs, not only carrying out transactions but also to learning skills to improve their economic standing.