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PETALING JAYA: The Government has decided to set RM3,000 as the poverty line for the urban poor based on feedback from people living in major urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur.

This is according to Federal Territories Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin whose ministry is to be renamed Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Ministry, in efforts to improve the lives of the urban poor.

“If you have three children and your household income is RM3,000 or below, you’re almost at the poverty line,” he said, adding that many lower income families had more than four children and still needed to pay for their cars, houses and other mortgage payments.

Therefore, a new set of criteria to eradicate urban poverty is in the pipeline, he said.

“I will have to work out the details with my ministry’s secretary-general,” he said on the sidelines of a family fair at the Malay-sian Tourism Information Centre here yesterday. Raja Nong said his ministry would also have to conduct a new census to identify those who came under the urban poverty mark.

“The number of urban poor and slum dwellers in the cities is rising,” said Raja Nong.

“There is no social safety net for such people, including single parents with three to five children living in low-cost flats.”

In his Budget 2010 speech on Friday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced that urban poverty eradication programmes would be drawn out nationwide.

The Budget had allocated RM48mil to implement the programmes.

According to Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha, the Government had decided two to three months ago that urban poverty eradication would be handled primarily by the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) under the Prime Minister's Department.

“The information of those identified as being in the urban poverty bracket will be passed on to the ICU, which gets a list from the Rural Department, and other ministries and departments.”