

14 OCT 1997

Sulaiman-Strategy

STRATEGIES BY AGRICULTURE MINISTRY TO FACE CURRENCY CRISIS

SABAK BERNAM, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- The Agriculture Ministry has drawn up various strategies to reduce imports of food items and to increase the export of agro-based foodstuffs in line with the government's efforts to deal with the currency crisis.

Its minister, Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, said he had called for a meeting of state executive councillors in charge of agriculture to discuss the best way of implementing the strategies.

He said that apart from pledging their support for the strategies, the excos gave their views on how to improve the nation's balance of payment.

"They agreed that as much as possible we will import only food items which cannot be produced locally, even then we will try to reduce such imports," he told a news conference after the presentation of the MS ISO 9002 award to BERNAS here, today.

He said the government would ensure that the prices of the food items for which imports would be reduced would not soar in the local market.

Sulaiman said the government was aware of the increasing demand for food items because of population increase and the people's greater purchasing power.

Sulaiman also said that two experts from Britain's Royal Agriculture College, who arrived yesterday were taken to visit the Padang Terap, Sik and Baling districts to observe the proposed sites for a big-scale agriculture project.

According to him, the experts had met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who said that the areas could also be developed for tourism.

However, he said the main activity would be agriculture to meet local demand and also for export.

Sulaiman also launched the new variety of long-grain aromatic rice produced by Bernas bearing the brand name "Sekinchan". -- BERNAMA

AZH HAR RM