

23/11/1998

Sabah assured of Federal assistance

Joniston Bangkuai

KOTA KINABALU, Sun. - The Federal Government is studying Sabah's request for financial assistance to hasten economic development in the State, Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed today said.

He gave the assurance that the State Government could count on the Federal Government for assistance, adding that State and Federal leaders had held a series of discussions on the matter.

"State leaders had discussed the matter with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and also with me and we are looking into the request," Mustapa told reporters after attending a gathering of Umno members in Putatan near here.

State Finance Minister Datuk Osu Sukam had when presenting Sabah's 1999 Budget at the State Assembly last Monday said that the State Government could expect financial support from the Central Government.

Asked about the amount requested by the State Government, Mustapa said the figure has yet to be decided as discussion is still in progress.

He said since the Barisan Nasional took over the State administration in 1994 the Federal Government has spent several million ringgit for poverty eradication programme and for implementing basic infrastructure in the rural areas.

"Despite the current economic downturn the Federal Government will continue to give priority to improving the well-being of the rural people in Sabah," he said.

In his speech, Mustapa said the BN Government had constructed 1,600km of roads and built 6,000 houses for the hardcore poor in Sabah over the last four years.

He also said that the BN had fulfilled most of the promises it made in the 1994 State election, the most significant of which is the setting up of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah costing more than a billion ringgit.

"Unlike the Opposition, we do not make empty promises ... we only make promises we can deliver," he said, adding that the BN Government was sensitive to the needs of the people.

Mustapa called on the people to continue rallying behind the Federal leadership under Dr Mahathir in efforts to bring Malaysia out of the economic crisis.

(END)