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Budget-Sabah/Sarawak

OVER RM11 BILLION FOR SABAH AND SARAWAK

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 12 (Bernama) -- The government has allocated over RM11 billion for Sabah and Sarawak in the 2004 Budget to fund various development programmes in the two states.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when tabling the budget in the Dewan Rakyat today that Sabah would be allocated RM5.9 billion and Sarawak, RM5.5 billion.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said these states would have wider road networks connecting major towns.

Presently, several towns in Sabah could only be reached by air or river transport but with the completion of these projects, all towns would be connected by road, he said.

In Sarawak, major road networks were being constructed to facilitate communications not only in the state but also between Sabah and Sarawak, he added.

Dr Mahathir said that apart from the newly completed airports of Tawau, Bintulu and Miri that can accommodate the Airbus 330, the Kuching airport would also be upgraded.

The Bintulu and Kuching ports were also being expanded while a new port would be built in Semalanjau to cater for the aluminium smelting plant, an investment from West Asia, which would also utilise a large portion of electricity produced from the Bakun Hydroelectric project.

In the education and health sectors, the two states will also be given significant allocations to implement projects, such as Phase 2 of Universiti Malaysia Sabah and the construction of the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) permanent campus in Samarahan.

The government had also taken over the Sabah Medical Centre from the private sector, which would be upgraded to a major hospital in Kota Kinabalu, to further enhance the quality of health service to the people.

On water supply, Dr Mahathir said that as an interim measure, the government had implemented rural water supply programmes, especially in schools, using the rain harvesting and tube well system.

To date, almost 700 schools in Sabah and Sarawak have been identified to benefit from these facilities with a cost of RM242 million.

-- BERNAMA

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