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Musa-Budget

REQUEST FOR ALLOCATIONS BASED ON PRIORITIES, SAYS SABAH CM

KOTA KINABALU, June 12 (Bernama) -- Sabah will focus on projects that could contribute to the people's well-being when asking for allocations from the Federal Government, Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman said today.

He said the state would be careful in requesting for allocations and would be doing so based on priorities.

"Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has told all states not to make excessive requests (for allocations). As for Sabah, our applications will be based on our priorities," Musa told reporters here.

At the fourth and final session of the 2004 Budget dialogue in Putrajaya last Tuesday, Dr Mahathir told menteri besar and chief ministers that states should refrain from applying for extremely large allocations for the 2004 Budget as the Federal Government may not be able to meet their requests.

"I hope the people will understand why the requests cannot be met. I also hope that the state governments and MPs will not tell the people that 'we have requested but it was turned down by the Federal Government' Dr Mahathir was reported as saying.

Musa said Sabah would be requesting for funds from the Federal government from time to time but the quantum would be reasonable.

He said among Sabah's priorities were public infrastructures and facilities like water supply, roads, schools and hospitals.

On the long-term plan to create a vibrant economic growth for the state, Musa said that it had all been set in his agenda for development of Sabah which focused on tourism, agriculture and manufacturing.

He also said the state government was giving great emphasis on prudent spending to ensure cost-effectiveness.

Meanwhile, the chief minister said Sabah planned to build handicraft-making factories to provide more jobs and economic activities for its rural people.

He said this was in line with Dr Mahathir's message at yesterday's meeting with menteri besar and chief ministers on the need for Sabah and Sarawak to promote handicrafts.

As for marketing, he said the government could provide a sort of clearing house to sell the handicrafts.

Musa urged the private sector to participate in the project with the government providing support to enable them obtain loans.

He said the state would also promote pineapples from Beaufort, said to be the best in the country.

-- BERNAMA

JS ZUL