

NO70 (F)
MAHATHIR--SARAWAK

8) (P)
KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 12 (BERNAMA)--DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE TODAY THAT THE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL AND SARAWAK GOVERNMENTS WOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE IMPENDING CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE STATE.

HE WAS COMMENTING ON A PRESS REPORT QUOTING CHIEF MINISTER DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI ABDUL RAHMAN YAKUB AS SAYING THAT HE WOULD STEP DOWN AND BE SUCCEEDED BY FORMER FEDERAL TERRITORY MINISTER DATUK AMAR HAJI TAIB MAHMOUD.

THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER SAID, "THERE WILL BE NO PROBLEMS OR REPERCUSSIONS TO EITHER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR SARAWAK IF DATUK AMAR HAJI TAIB IS APPOINTED CHIEF MINISTER AS IT IS AN INTRA-PARTY CHANGEOVER."

HE TOLD REPORTERS HERE THAT DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI ABDUL RAHMAN HAD DISCUSSED WITH HIM HIS DECISION TO STEP DOWN "POSSIBLY AT THE END OF THIS MONTH."

HE ALSO DISCLOSED THAT "SOMEONE FROM SARAWAK" WOULD BE APPOINTED FEDERAL TERRITORY MINISTER TO FILL THE POST VACATED BY DATUK AMAR HAJI TAIB. ---BERNAMA MORE 1822/MD

NO71 (F)
MAHATHIR--SARAWAK 2 KUALA LUMPUR

COMMENTING ON SPECULATIONS THAT DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER DR. SULAIMAN LAUD WOULD BE THE ONE, HE SAID, "IT COULD BE."

IN ANY CASE, HE ADDED, "IN THIS COUNTRY, YOU ARE FREE TO SPECULATE ON ANYTHING, SO FEEL FREE TO SPECULATE."

HE HOWEVER STATED THAT THERE WAS NO QUOTA ON THE NUMBER OF SARAWAK LEADERS IN THE FEDERAL CABINET.

HE REFERRED TO DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI ABDUL RAHMAN'S ANECDOTE THAT PEOPLE FROM PENINSULAR MALAYSIA WOULD BE AUTOMATICALLY ALLOWED TO STAY FOR A MINIMUM OF ONE MONTH, AND SAID THIS INDICATED THERE WAS CLOSE rapport BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS.

HE BELIEVED THAT THE CHIEF MINISTER'S CHOICE OF A SUCCESSOR SHOWED HIS INTEREST IN WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. ---BERNAMA MORE 1825/MD

NO72 (F)
MAHATHIR--SARAWAK 3 KUALA LUMPUR

"HIS REASONING IS THAT IF HE STEPS DOWN HE SHOULD CHOOSE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS KUALA LUMPUR WELL POSSIBLY SOMEONE WHO HAS SERVED AS A FEDERAL CABINET MINISTER LIKE HIMSELF."

DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI ABDUL RAHMAN WAS THE EDUCATION MINISTER BEFORE BECOMING SABAH CHIEF MINISTER. ---BERNAMA 1826/MD