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REPEAT aae

Mahathir-Sabah (with pix)

MAHATHIR HOPES NEW ERA WILL DAWN IN SABAH

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he hopes that a new era will emerge in Sabah following the formation of the Barisan Nasional (BN) government in the state last week.

He said the new era can be brought about, considering that the appointment of Tan Sri Sakaran Dandaj as the new Sabah chief minister had been well accepted by all sides in the state.

"I believe a new era will dawn in Sabah," he told reporters when asked about the setting up of the new Sabah Cabinet. He had earlier launched the book "The making of the national car - not just a dream", here.

The BN formed the new state government in Sabah when it garnered a majority of seats in the state legislative assembly after several Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) assemblymen crossed over to BN component parties. Sakaran succeeded Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan who resigned as the chief minister.

Dr Mahathir said the number of members of the Sabah Cabinet had yet to be determined, and that the matter would be discussed at a meeting of the BN Supreme Council to be held here tomorrow night. -- more

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Mahathir-Sabah 2 Kuala Lumpur

On the emergence of several new political parties in Sabah, all of which had expressed the desire to join the BN, Dr Mahathir said the matter had to be looked into before any decision could be made.

"We have to see. Maybe there is a need (to set up these parties). Maybe there is some misunderstanding," he said.

Dr Mahathir gave the assurance that the BN would fulfill its pledge to rotate the post of chief minister every two years among a Muslim Bumiputera, a non-Muslim Bumiputera and a Chinese.

When asked about the possibility of the Kadazan leader to be picked for the post coming from Umno and not from another BN component party, Dr Mahathir said: "When we come to that stage we will think about it."

Sabah Umno information chief Haji Karim Ghani was reported today to have said that the post of chief minister would be rotated among ethnic groupings and not BN component parties.

Karim had said that therefore the Kadazan leader chosen might be from Umno.

Asked who would replace Sakaran as Land and Cooperative Development Minister, a post he had given up to become Sabah chief minister, Dr Mahathir said a decision had not been made but added that the post might most probably be given to an MP from Sabah.

Dr Mahathir, when asked whether the use of the passport would be waived for travel by Malaysians between Sabah and states in the peninsula, said the matter would have to be determined by the people of Sabah themselves.

"Certainly, it is odd that within your own country you have to use passport. But we appreciate their fears and we will take it into consideration," he said. -- Bernama

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