

PM still looking for right candidate to fill post

JITRA, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the candidate to fill the quota of a Cabinet Minister from Sabah will not necessarily be from a Kadazan-Dusun based-party.

"He will not necessarily be from a Kadazan-based party but he will be from Sabah," he said when asked by reporters when he would announce the Kadazan-Dusun candidate to fill up the Sabah quota in the Cabinet.

"The vacancy in the Cabinet is not for the Kadazan-Dusun but for the Sabah people," he told reporters at his Hari Raya Aidil Adha open house at Dewan Jitra here.

Dr Mahathir said originally, the Cabinet post was not a Kadazan seat.

"Previously, there were Kadazans in the Cabinet like Datuk Dr James Ougkili and Datuk Kasitah Gadam," he said.

Recalling how the Cabinet seat was given to a Sabah leader, he said:

"Actually, the Cabinet post was first given to Tun

Datu Mustapha Datu Harun although at that time there was already a Sabah member in the Cabinet."

Dr Mahathir said after Datu Mustapha quit the Barisan Nasional, the Cabinet post was given to a Kadazan.

"Therefore, we cannot say the post belongs to the Kadazan. Actually, it belongs to the Sabah people," he added.

Dr Mahathir, when announcing the Cabinet on May 4, did not name the Minister from Sabah in the line-up.

Before the general election, Parti Demokratik Sabah (PDS) Datuk Bernard Dompok, a Kadazan, was made a Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

The post was left vacant after Dompok was defeated in Penampang in last month's general election.

Asked on the candidate to be appointed to the Cabinet, Dr Mahathir said he was still looking for the right candidate.

He said the interest of all

Barisan Nasional component parties and various ethnic groups in Sabah would be considered in deciding the candidate for the post.

Asked about the criteria for the candidate, the Prime Minister said: "He will represent the State and must be acceptable to the BN component parties and the various ethnic groups."

Dr Mahathir also said it would be difficult for the Government to accommodate every component party by giving each of them a seat in the Cabinet.

"There are 14 parties in the coalition. Some are small, some big parties... We try to be fair but it is difficult to accommodate all the parties. Some may not get to be in the Cabinet," he said.

On the new list of Senators, Dr Mahathir said he had not finalised it.

Asked whether the Government would have election of Senators, the Prime Minister said the duties of Malaysian Senators differed from their counterparts in other countries.

"In some countries, they hold elections for the Senate and the Senators are powerful to the extent of crippling the functions of the Government and overruling the Government and the president," he added.

He said if members of the Senate were elected, they would concentrate merely on gaining popularity.

"When they rely on popularity to remain in office, their decisions will no longer be based on common sense and logic or certain interests."

"This system has caused a lot of Governments to be unable to function. When you give too much power to the Senate, then the Government cannot function," he added.

Asked whether he would review the limit of a six-year term for Senators, Dr Mahathir said: "It will continue that way, otherwise some senators will want to be senators for life and other people won't have a chance."

Dr Mahathir said the system practised by Malaysia which allowed the elected

Government to choose the Senators was a good system.

"Otherwise we will have a Senate with a different membership as in some countries and as a result nothing could be done."

"The worst thing a country could suffer from is lack of decisiveness... the Press always complains that some Prime Ministers are indecisive. Actually the Press likes indecisive Prime Ministers as it provides a lot of news."

"But here, we decide and that's it," he added.

Asked whether the Government would allow the local government members to be elected, he said a local government election would have the same effect.

"We see in many countries, the countries stay in permanent tension because they are having election every now and then."

"Everybody cannot focus on the development of the country, they are more concerned about contesting the election. As a result they neglect the interest of the people," he added.