

# PM: We'll find ways to reduce costs of goods in Sabah

Mahathir 30 NOV 1995

KOTA KINABALU, Wed. — The Government will conduct a study to find ways to reduce the prices of goods in Sabah which are higher than those in Peninsular Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the decision was made at the Cabinet meeting held here this morning.

The Cabinet, he said, had directed the Domestic Trade and Consumers Affairs Ministry to conduct an in-depth study on the cause of Sabah's high cost of living.

"It will make recommendations to the Federal Government and the State Government on how the cost of living could be lowered," he told a Press conference at the old airport terminal at the end of his three-day visit to Sabah.

He said that the Government would want to see that the benefits from any reduction in prices of goods were enjoyed by consumers and not exploited by any party, including retailers.

"We hope all parties concerned will work together in finding a solution to this matter," he added.

Dr Mahathir regretted that some traders had been resorting to all sorts of excuses to keep the prices of goods high.

For example, he said, when the price of oil was increased, the traders would use the high production cost factor to raise the price as soon as they could, but when the price was supposed to go down, they would be very reluctant to reduce it.

Asked if there were other matters on Sabah which were discussed at the Cabinet meeting, he said the discussion was not entirely on Sabah.

"But having held the Cabinet meeting here, obviously we talked about Sabah a lot."

He said one of the reasons why the Government had decided to hold Cabinet meetings in different States from time to time was "to get the feel of what is happening on the ground".

"We want to see what the problems are," he said.

He said there were many problems in Sabah which the Government had taken steps to overcome.

He said the Chief Minister Datuk Seri S Samy Vellu stay back in Sabah to look into the water supply problems in the State and find ways to tackle them effectively.

Launching the Kota Kinabalu Industrial Park in Telipok near here yesterday, Dr Mahathir had said that he was confident that the cost of living in Sabah could be lowered by efficient control of the prices of goods.

He said one of the factors which contributed to the high cost of living was the high cost of transportation of goods from the peninsula to Sabah.

Asked on the rotation of Sabah Chief Minister, Dr Mahathir said it was still on "as scheduled".

Under the present rotation system, the Chief Minister's two-year term expires on March 27 next year. Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said, is representing the Muslim Bumiputera.

On who would be the Chief Minister after the term expired, Dr Mahathir said it would be someone from the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP), whose president is Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee.

Asked whether Yong had

the opportunity to be the Chief Minister in future, he said: "Everybody has the opportunity."

On whether the rotation would not be as scheduled as there had been calls by various leaders in Sabah for Salleh to continue as Chief Minister, Dr Mahathir said: "If there is an agreement by all, we will consider."

Asked on yesterday's report that United States President Bill Clinton had appealed to Americans to support sending US troops to Bosnia, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia welcomed any positive action.

It was also reported that Clinton had said that he would allow a small number of US troops in a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) advance mission which would establish headquarters and set up communications.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped any troops sent would help to enforce peace.

He said Malaysia did not want troops to go there and "just look around and then when the Serb attack, say 'well, we are here to keep the peace, if there is no peace to keep, we don't keep, we don't enforce the peace, that is worse than not having any troops."

He said in Sebnica, something like 8,000 people were massacred by the Serbs because the so-called peacekeeper just left the place.

"If they had known that they could not help, the best thing for them to do was not to say that it was a safe haven. The poor Bosnians went there thinking they were safe and when the Serbs attacked, they were left to the Serbs and I am quite sure they murdered quite a lot of these people."