

27 JUN 1996

Mahathir-Sabah

AMENDMENTS TO SABAH LAWS PROPOSED BY STATE LEADERS, SAYS PM

KOTA KINABALU, June 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the amendments of five Sabah laws to transfer some powers of the Chief Minister to his Cabinet were proposed by state leaders.

He said former Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak made the proposal to him because Salleh felt the powers were too broad.

"We agreed to the amendments after studying the powers of the Chief Minister," he said when met by reporters during his stopover here on his way back to Kuala Lumpur after a vacation overseas.

Several state ministers, led by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Ghapur Salleh, were at the airport to receive Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on the amendments which were passed by the state assembly on June 17.

The five laws are the Forestry Enactment 1968, Land Ordinance (Chapter 68), Mining Ordinance 1960, Sabah Foundation Enactment 1966 and the Delegation of Powers Enactment 1963.

The opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) claimed during the debate on the amendment bills in the assembly there was an ulterior motive behind the changes since they were initiated by the federal government.

Dr Mahathir said the powers of the Sabah Chief Minister were little different from those of other chief ministers or menteri besar.

But one major difference was that the menteri besar or chief ministers of other states made decisions after consulting their respective State Executive Council or Cabinet.

"In Sabah, the Chief Minister (in the past) sometimes made decisions which were not all that wise. That's why we accepted the proposal by Datuk Salleh," he said.

He said the changes are for the good of Sabah and should be supported by all in the state if they truly want a good and responsible administration.

Dr Mahathir said the decision to amend the state laws was linked to the Barisan Nasional system to rotate the Chief Minister's post among the three main communities in Sabah.

He said a person who became the Chief Minister would now not be able to ignore the views of his political colleagues from other parties.

"We want to see consultations between component parties in the BN," he said.

The system would make the state government more stable since all parties could take part in the decisions of the government, he added.

On the position of Salleh, Dr Mahathir said he would be given a role in the government. -- BERNAMA

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