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Mahathir - Sabah

SABAH CM POST WILL BE ROTATED IN THE ABSENCE OF CONSENSUS - DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he will stick to his pledge to rotate the post of Sabah Chief Minister if Sabah Barisan Nasional parties cannot reach a consensus on it.

"We'll abide by our pledge," the Prime Minister said when reporters asked about the issue after opening Malaysia's Super Corridor Expo'96" and conference at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said the BN could resolve the issue and there was no need to hold a state election as proposed by the opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS).

"It is not a problem, it is a media problem only. It is not my problem," he said.

All eight State BN parties had agreed to leave it to the Prime Minister to make a final decision on the rotation of the post of State Chief Minister now held by Datuk Salleh Said Keruak of Umno. He is expected to vacate the post on March 17 under the rotation system.

Sabah Umno at its meeting on Saturday agreed to live it to Dr Mahathir to make a decision on behalf of the State Umno on the rotation proposal.

Salleh, who is also Chairman of the Sabah Umno Liaison Committee, had told reporters after the meeting that they would abide by Dr Mahathir's decision.

The proposal to rotate the post of Sabah Chief Minister among the three major communities in the state -- Muslim Bumiputeras, Non-Muslim Bumiputeras and the Chinese -- was made by the Prime Minister in Beaufort, Sabah, during the state election campaign in February 1994.

However several groups wanted a review of the proposal to ensure political stability in the state.

Salleh's term as Chief Minister under the rotation system is scheduled to end on March 17 and after that the leader of the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) Datuk Yong Teck Lee was expected to succeed as Chief Minister of Sabah.

Responding to a question, Dr Mahathir said if the BN did not implement its pledge to rotate the post of Chief Minister it would be subjected to various allegations.

However, he said the BN was ready to review the proposal if all the Sabah BN parties agreed that the post of Chief Minister should not be rotated, Dr Mahathir said.

"If everyone agreed, I can change the rotation system," the Prime Minister said.

He said: "We have to analyse the pledge..what is meant by the pledge and then we have to abide by the pledge...the BN usually abides by its pledge."

Dr Mahathir said he had yet to receive any proposal from the Sabah BN on the rotation system.

"I asked them whether they are leaving it to me or not and up to now I have not received anymore information," he said.

He said once he had received the Sabah BN proposal, he would consider it.

Dr Mahathir also said the BN did not propose to hold a meeting to discuss the issue. --BERNAMA