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Amendments

SABAH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS DOES NOT INVOLVE IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

PASIR MAS, Feb 29 (Bernama) -- The proposed amendments to the Sabah state constitution will not involve the state's immigration regulations, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak said today.

The amendments would only hinge on curtailing the administrative powers of the chief minister with regards to approving licences for logging concessions and land which must be referred to the state cabinet first, he added.

"Other areas like immigration and local government will continue as usual. Hence, the proposed amendments does not in any way violate the spirit of the Malaysia Agreement but instead, it further strengthens the collective responsibility to develop Sabah," he told reporters at a Hari Raya Aidil Fitri gathering organised by the Pasir Mas Umno division, here.

Immigration powers were among the matters asked by Sabah as a condition to join Malaysia in 1963. It stipulates the use of passports for foreigners and the filling of IMM 114 forms for Malaysians from Peninsular Malaysia entering Sabah for social visits.

Malaysians outside Sabah seeking to work in the state must apply for a work permit.

Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan, who claimed that the amendments would go against the spirit of the Malaysia Agreement, threatened to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice.

Salleh said he would explain to the people of Sabah the rationale behind the proposed amendments to prevent them from being confused by an opposition party out to seek political mileage over the issue.

On reports that the Sabah Chief Minister was very powerful, he said the state Attorney-General Datuk Stephen Foo had been directed to liaise with the Federal Attorney-General's Chambers to compare the powers vested with the Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers of other states under their respective state constitutions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's views would also be taken into account before amending the state constitution, he added.

He also refuted rumours that Sabah state elections would be held after the amendments.

"This question does not arise at all as the time for the state elections is still far away, and there is no major crisis in the state," said Salleh, who is also Sabah Umno Liaison Committee chairman.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, who also attended the gathering, said the federal government had approved RM100 million to carry out various development projects in the Sabah this year.

The allocation was approved to fulfill the Barisan Nasional government's promise to the people during the state elections in February 1994. -- BERNAMA

WM TS LDB