

13 FEB 1996

Mahathir-Sabah

SABAH UMNO GIVES MANDATE TO MAHATHIR TO DECIDE ON CM'S POST

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 13 (Bernama) -- Sabah Umno today gave Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad the mandate to decide on the issue of whether the Sabah chief ministership should be rotated among the three major communities in the state.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said a Sabah Umno delegation led by its deputy chairman Datuk Osu Sukam called on him at his office here today.

The discussions focused only on the issue of the chief ministership, he told reporters after officiating the topping off ceremony of the 88-storey Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) twin towers, now the tallest in the world.

Dr Mahathir said the views put forward by the delegation was rasional.

"Sabah Umno gave me the mandate to deccide and will support whatever decision I make," he added.

He said, however, he would be meeting component parties of Barisan Nasional in Sabah to obtain their views on the matter.

Dr Mahathir said leaders of one of the parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), had already met him and given him the mandate to decide.

LDP had earlier issued a statement saying it was not in favour of the post of chief minister being rotated.

As to views expressed that BN need not carry out its pledge to rotate the post of chief minister, made during the Sabah state elections in February 1994, because it did not win, he said that element would also be considered.

He would also take into account the commitment and views of the lower echelon of the parties, he added.

"For that reason, before I make a decision, I must meet with all the component parties to get their views," he said.

He added that he believed in discussions before arriving at a decision.

Datuk Osu, the Minister of Land and Cooperative Development, told reporters at his office that the Sabah Umno delegation made up of members of the State Umno Liaison Committee held discussions lasting 90 minutes with Dr Mahathir.

He said Dr Mahathir gave all of them the opportunity to present their views on the issue.

"The president, on the other hand, advised Umno Sabah not only on the issue of rotation of the chief minister's post but also on party discipline and unity," he added.

Osu said Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak did not attend because he was an interested party in the issue.

Today's meeting was one of a series between Dr Mahathir and leaders of the Sabah BN component parties who decided to leave it up to him to make the final decision reegarding his pledge to rotate the post of chief minister in Sabah.

Osu said: "Sabah Umno is fully confident that the Prime Minister will make a wise decision and satisfy all sides in Sabah BN with regard to this issue."

The Umno Supreme Council meeting last week also gave the mandate to Dr Mahathir to resolve the issue.

At its meeting in Kota Kinabalu last month, Sabah Umno unanimously rejected the proposal to rotate the post of chief minister which if implemented was expected to switch to Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee on March 17.

In KOTA KINABALU, Salleh today reiterated that he would accept whatever decision that is made by Dr Mahathir.

Sabah Umno had presented its view to the Prime Minister and "we just have to wait for his decision", he told reporters after handing over Hari Raya goodies for security forces here. -- BERNAMA

JS YBY