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Mahathir - Sabah

SALLEH SAID KERUAK TO CONTINUE AS SABAH CM BEYOND MARCH 17

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Salleh Said Keruak's term as Sabah Chief Minister, which ends on March 17 under the rotation system, has been extended.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Salleh would continue as Chief Minister until such time he had made a final decision on the rotation system.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional Chairman, said Salleh's two-year term which would expire on March 17 had to be extended to enable a number of actions to be taken and a final decision on it was made.

The actions included amending the Sabah State Constitution and state laws and this would take several months, he said after receiving cheques being sponsorship money for the Le Tour De Langkawi cycling race.

Dr Mahathir said the problem in Sabah was that the Chief Minister there was too powerful compared to the Chief Ministers and Menteri Besar of other states.

"This has given rise to doubts to those who could not fill the post," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the amendments to the Sabah Constitution and the state's laws were aimed at curtailing the administrative powers of the Sabah Chief Minister.

He said amendments to the Sabah Constitution and the state's laws would be made as soon as possible but this depended on the relevant parties as it involved comparison with the constitutions and laws of other states.

The Prime Minister was confident that any decision taken on the question of the rotation of the Chief Minister's post would be well received by the Sabah BN component parties.

"I have the written pledge from all the component parties that they will support any decision which I make on the matter. This will make it easy for me to resolve the problem," he said.

Dr Mahathir was confident that any decision taken would be in the interest of Sabah as a whole and not that of any particular party.

"As BN Chairman I cannot side any component party but the decision must satisfy the BN itself," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno did not aspire to expand to Sarawak as it had done in the case of Sabah.

Umno entered Sabah as the situation then warranted it, he added. --

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