

28 MAY 1996

Yong-Sworn

YONG SWORN IN AS NEW SABAH CHIEF MINISTER

KOTA KINABALU, May 28 (Bernama) -- Sabah Progressive Party president Datuk Yong Teck Lee was today sworn in as the state's 10th Chief Minister, replacing Datuk Salleh Said Keruak, to fulfil the Barisan Nasional's (BN) promise of rotating the post among leaders of the three main communities in the state.

Yong, 38, representing the Chinese community, took the oath of office before Yang DiPertua Negeri Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai at 10.15 am at the Istana here.

The ceremony was witnessed by High Court judge Datuk Charles Ho while the "doa selamat" was read by state Islamic Religious Affairs Department official Jatmin Mohd Som.

The swearing-in of the other Cabinet members will be held at the Istana at 2.30 pm today.

Also present at the ceremony were Sakaran's wife Toh Puan Hajah Rukaiyah Panglima Abdullah, State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Hassan Alban Sandukong, senior government officers and local dignitaries.

The promise to rotate the Chief Minister's post among Muslim Bumiputeras, Non-Muslim Bumiputeras and the Chinese community, was made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during the state election in February 1994.

Party Bersatu Sabah (PBS) won the election but the Barisan Nasional took over the helm of the state government on March 17 that year when several of the PBS state assemblymen crossed over to BN component parties or formed their own parties which were later accepted into the BN.

Sakaran, then the state BN chairman, took over as Chief Minister but relinquished his post on Dec 28, 1994, when he was appointed the Yang Dipertua Negeri.

Salleh, who succeeded Sakaran, was supposed to end his term of office on March 17 this year but Dr Mahathir decided to delay the rotation indefinitely until the state laws to curb the powers of the Chief Minister, in matters relating to forestry and land, were amended.

Dr Mahathir said later the rotation could take place without waiting for the amendments which would be tabled at the State Legislative Assembly sitting on June 16 and 17.

Yong, a lawyer and former PBS Deputy President, left the party before the state polls in 1994 to form SAPP following a leadership crisis.

Married with four children, Yong was Assistant Minister of Local Government and Housing and Assistant Minister of Finance before he was appointed Deputy Chief Minister in the PBS government.

When the BN took over the state government, Yong was again appointed Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Local Government and Housing before being appointed as Finance Minister in a cabinet reshuffle in November last year.--BERNAMA

OPP AAM