

27 MAY 1996

Yong-Sworn

YONG TO BE SWORN IN AS CHIEF MINISTER TOMORROW

KOTA KINABALU, May 27 (Bernama) -- Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee will be sworn in as Sabah Chief Minister before the Yang DiPertua Negeri, Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai, at 10 am at the Istana here tomorrow.

According to the Yang DiPertua Negeri's confidential secretary Haji Harith Haji Yahya, only Yong will be sworn in at the ceremony to take over from Datuk Salleh Said Keruak.

"It is up to the new Chief Minister to decide and advise us when his (state) Cabinet members will be sworn in," he told reporters at the Istana.

He said the Istana received Salleh's resignation letter at about 1 pm today, to take effect tomorrow.

Salleh had tendered an undated resignation letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to make way for a new Chief Minister under the rotation system promised by the Barisan Nasional during the 1994 state election campaign.

The post is to be rotated every two years between leaders of Sabah's three main communities -- Muslim Bumiputeras, non-Muslim Bumiputeras and Chinese.

The BN failed to defeat Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in the election but PBS president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan was forced within weeks to resign as Chief Minister after mass defections by his party's state assemblymen.

The BN took over the state government with Sakaran as the Chief Minister but he stepped down a few months later to become the Yang DiPertua Negeri and handed the leadership to Salleh.

Salleh's term was to end on March 17 this year but he was asked by the Prime Minister to stay on until amendments to five state laws aimed at curbing the powers of the Chief Minister are passed by the State Assembly.

Originally scheduled for debate on April 25 and 26, the amendments will now be presented to the assembly during its June 17 and 18 meeting.

Meanwhile, Salleh paid a courtesy call on Sakaran at the Istana this afternoon.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Salleh said he informed Sakaran that he will vacate his post tomorrow and thanked him for the support given him during his term.

He said he will hand over his duties to Yong immediately after the swearing-in ceremony tomorrow at the Chief Minister's office at Sabah Foundation Building at Likas.

Salleh, who also met Yong, said they did not discuss the composition of the Cabinet since it had been decided between Yong and the Prime Minister at their meeting last Saturday.

"It is up to Yong to appoint members of his Cabinet based on his talk with the Prime Minister," he said. -- BERNAMA

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