

21/02/1998

A Kadazandusun to be next CM of Sabah

Ashraf Abdullah; Joniston Bangkuai

KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - The next Chief Minister of Sabah will be from the Kadazandusun origin but not necessarily the current Deputy Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said under the 1994 State election promise, the Sabah Chief Ministership would be on a two-year rotation among Muslim Bumiputera, Chinese and a Kadazandusun.

"But it does not necessarily mean it has to be the Deputy Chief Minister," Dr Mahathir told reporters at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport before leaving for Kuala Lumpur at the end of his two-day visit to Sabah.

A non-Muslim Bumiputera candidate will replace Datuk Yong Teck Lee as Chief Minister when his two-year term ends on May 28.

Currently, there are three Deputy Chief Ministers representing the three main communities. They are Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh (Muslim Bumiputera), Datuk Joseph Kurup (Non-Muslim Bumiputera) and Datuk Tham Nyip Shen (Chinese).

Yong, who was then Deputy Chief Minister replaced Datuk Salleh Said as Chief Minister when the former's term ended in 1996.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether the Deputy Chief Minister (Kurup) would be made Chief Minister as Yong's appointment two years ago had set a precedent for the Deputy Chief Minister to be made Chief Minister.

He said the rotation of the Chief Ministers was successful and the system would be continued even after the next general election.

On whether the ground in Sabah was "fertile" for the State election, Dr Mahathir said:

"The ground is always fertile."

On his advice to Umno divisions and branches that contests for party posts should be avoided, Dr Mahathir, who is also party president said Sabah Umno had responded well to his advice.

The Prime Minister met the Yang di-Pertua Sabah Tun Sakaran Dandai this afternoon.

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