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Salleh-Election

ECONOMY NOT AN ISSUE IN SABAH ELECTION, SAYS SALLEH

KOTA BELUD, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- The economy is not going to be an issue in the coming Sabah election because the state is expected to achieve a modest economic growth despite the national economy being in contraction, former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak said today.

Salleh said while the whole nation was expecting a severe contraction of around 6 per cent for 1998, Sabah would see a 2.6 per cent growth this year and this was expected to further improve to 3.2 per cent in the new year.

For this reason, he said, the opposition parties seemed to be oblivious to the economic issue but would harp on other localised issues.

These issues included the development performance of the state government, performance of State Assemblymen in serving the people, racial and religious issues, the "Sabah for Sabahans" issue, basic infrastructure and utilities.

Other issues being raised by the opposition are rural development, poverty and privatisation, he said at a meet-the people session at Kampung Nanamum near here.

" As a former chief minister, I feel that all of these issues have already been addressed by the state Barisan Nasional government. The post of the chief minister has gone through the full round of rotation with Tun Sakaran (Dandai), I myself, Datuk Yong Teck Lee and the incumbent Tan Sri Bernard Dompok," he added.

The rotation of the chief minister's post is in keeping with the 1994 election promise made by prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Salleh, who was chief minister from Dec 1994 to May 1996, said that although the date of the state election had yet to be fixed, it was an open secret that all political parties in the state were already waiting for the "whistle to blow".

The state election is widely expected to be held before March next year.

" This time around in Sabah, the opposition parties seem to have been harping on issues which are very much localised to the electorate in the state," he said.

Salleh, who is also an Umno Supreme Council member, also criticised the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), the state's main opposition party, for making an issue out of the formation of Umno in the state by asking parties from Peninsular Malaysia not to interfere in Sabah.

" Opposition parties should not whip up parochial sentiments in their campaign if they are true Malaysians who love this country. It (PBS) was once part and parcel of the BN government," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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