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We will support Sabah as much as possible, says Dr M

KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there should be maximum communication between the Federal and Sabah Governments for a close working relationship.

Speaking during a brief stopover at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport en route to Kuala Lumpur from Tokyo, he said newly-appointed Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok understood the need for cordial ties with the Federal Government.

"I have spoken to Dompok and he agrees that there should be maximum communication so that when we do things we do it together," he said.

Dr Mahathir had a 20-minute meeting with Dompok at the airport's VIP lounge.

On the appointment of Datuk Osu Sukam as Sabah Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister, he said it was aimed at further strengthening the State Government in view of the forthcoming State election.

He said Osu and Dompok could act as bridge between the State and Federal Governments as both had served in the Federal Cabinet.

Dr Mahathir said Osu understood the importance of working together in the Sabah Government and Barisan Nasional.

"As we know, some day we will have an election and we cannot go on thinking about minor things," he said. The Federal Government would like to support the Sabah Government as much as possible.

The Prime Minister said there were many problems in Sabah, such as water and electricity supply and other basic infrastructure.

He said the State's finances must be managed efficiently in view of the economic problems.

"We have to manage the finances of Sabah very well because these are hard times and we cannot chop down trees the way we used to before; so we have to be very careful."

He said considering the coming State election, Sabah needed the strongest possible combination in the State Cabinet.

"We need the strongest possible combination and although Osu is a Federal Minister, we think he has a big responsibility here."

On Osu's replacement in the Federal Cabinet, Dr Mahathir said he had yet to make a decision but it would be an Umno leader from Sabah.

Asked about Dompok's unprecedented move to appoint his predecessor Datuk Yong Teck Lee in the Cabinet, Dr Mahathir said Yong had told him he would like to continue.

However, he said Yong did not want a post higher than an ordinary Minister so that he could focus on other matters including looking after his party.

He also said Yong's predecessor Datuk Salleh Tun Said was not re-appointed to the Cabinet after his term expired on May 28, 1996 as he wanted a rest.

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