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Sabah-Rotation

DR M'S STATEMENT ON CM'S ROTATION CONFIRMS BN STAND - DOMPOK

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 15 (Bernama) -- Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said today Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has "once and for all" confirmed the Barisan Nasional's position on rotating the Chief Minister's post.

"We've now got a clear stand from the BN chairman (Dr Mahathir) himself and I think Sabahans need not raise the issue anymore," he told reporters here.

The Prime Minister, upon his return from the G15 Summit in Jamaica today, said the BN would continue its system of rotating the post among the three major ethnic groups in Sabah if it retained the people's mandate in the coming state election.

Dr Mahathir said the system would be continued because it had proved successful.

In welcoming the statement, Dompok said his announcement explained the BN's stand on the matter "once and for all".

The rotation system was proposed by Dr Mahathir just before the 1994 state polls under which the chief ministership would be rotated among Muslim Bumiputeras, Chinese and non-Muslim Bumiputeras for a two-year term each.

Dompok, who is the Sabah BN chairman, said the state BN had not asked the Prime Minister make clear the BN's stand on the system because he had already made known to BN leaders that the system would be continued.

"However, certain quarters had turned it into an issue. But with the Prime Minister's explanation, I feel the matter will not remain as a question mark in the minds of Sabahans," he said.

Asked for his views on the system, Dompok said it had brought about political stability and enhanced the role of the state cabinet.

"Important matters that were previously decided by the Chief Minister by himself were now referred to the cabinet, hence, we have a stronger cabinet.

"This system also brings about racial harmony in Sabah because the three major ethnic groups have the opportunity to head the state government," he said.

On opposition claims that the system was unconstitutional, Dompok said the state constitution stipulated that the leader of the party that commanded the most seats in the State Legislative Assembly be appointed as the Chief Minister.

"We (BN) have been registered as a party although our membership is made up of (component) parties, and anyone who is appointed to head the state BN is the head of a party in Sabah and eligible to be chosen as a Chief Minister," he said.

Meanwhile, Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) president Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia concurred with the BN leadership's decision, saying Sabahans had accepted the rotation system.

"As a small component of the ruling coalition, we always support whatever decisions made by the BN leadership in the interest of the Sabah people," he told Bernama when contacted.

The State Agriculture and Fisheries Minister said the rotation system proved the existence of power-sharing among the three major ethnic groups in Sabah.

He, however, expressed the hope that the Chief Minister from a

particular race would not act at his whims or neglect the interests of other ethnic groups under his administration.

-- BERNAMA

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