

17 MAR 1999

Osu-Mahathir

OSU SUKAM CALLS ON PM, DISCUSSES STATE CABINET LINE-UP

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 (Bernama) -- Sabah's new Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam today called on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here and sought the Prime Minister's views on the proposed line-up of the state Cabinet, among other things.

When approached by reporters after the hour-long meeting at the Prime Minister's Department, Osu said: " We discussed state administrative issues and I sought his advice and views."

Osu said Dr Mahathir had left the matter of the state cabinet line-up fully to the chief minister to decide.

The state cabinet line-up would be announced and sworn in on Saturday.

Osu, who took the oath of office as Sabah's 12th chief minister last Monday, said the state cabinet line-up has not been finalised yet.

Osu succeeded Tan Sri Bernard Dompok who failed to retain the Moyog seat in last weekend's state election.

On speculation of Dompok's appointment to the Senate, Osu said the matter was at the discretion of the prime minister.

"But we'll make the most of the experience of Sabah leaders for the good and future of the Sabah people and the BN government in Sabah.

"The (Dompok's) appointment is secondary. What's important is that they (Dompok and other unelected leaders) are willing to lend their experience in the interest of the BN," he said.

Osu said he would spell out his plans for Sabah after the first state cabinet meeting next week.

However, he said, priority would be on eradicating poverty in Sabah, which is among states still with a sizeable urban and rural poor population.

"The second focus will be on rural development. Being a physically large state, the question of its development must be put first so that racial sentiments will not be harped upon again in the coming general election," he said.

Osu was also asked on Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan's claim that phantom voters had helped some BN candidates to win in the recent state polls.

Osu replied : "All sorts of excuses crop up once you lose whereas before this he had already talked about the PBS winning.

"Don't listen to sour grapes. They can meet us again in five years time."

-- BERNAMA

RA RYN