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PM: Power-sharing in Sabah to continue

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KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - Umno will continue to share power with the other component parties in Sabah by continuing to rotate the post of Chief Minister.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, responding to questions, said the resolutions passed by Umno divisions, their Wanita and Youth wings pushing for the practice to be discontinued were not a true reflection of the feelings of the people.

"That is Umno's resolution, we have not heard what the others have to say," Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, told a Press conference at the end of a two-day visit to Sabah.

All 14 Umno divisions which have held their divisional delegates meetings so far have adopted this resolution.

There are 20 Umno divisions in Sabah. All 20 Wanita and Youth wings took a similar stance at their meetings which had been concluded.

They wanted this motion to be tabled at next month's Umno General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, saying that the system was no longer practical as Umno had been accepted by the people.

Commenting on this new situation which emerged after Umno won all 24 seats it contested under the BN banner in the March 12-13 State election, Dr Mahathir said: "No, we promised that we will rotate and we will rotate."

He said the stance of the Umno divisions was "only a resolution, and not a decision."

The system has produced five Chief Ministers - Tun Sakaran Dandai who resigned when he was appointed Yang di-Pertua Negeri, Datuk Salleh Tun Said, Datuk Yong Teck Lee, Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and the present Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam.

Dompok, president of the Kadazandusun-based Parti Demokratik Sabah was appointed Chief Minister in May last year and was to have continued after the election. But he lost his Moyog seat while his party won just two of the 12 seats it contested.

As a result, Osu who is the State Umno chief was made Chief Minister. When asked by reporters whether the rotation system would be ended, Dr Mahathir said it would depend on the people.

Osu and Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat were with Dr Mahathir at the Press conference.

The Prime Minister was also asked on the Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) president Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia being appointed as a Federal Minister.

"We promised and we will do it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Pandikar would take over from Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, a former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, who resigned to contest in the State election.

Chong, who is Liberal Democratic Party president, won in Kudat and has since been appointed Sabah Tourism Development, Science and Technology Minister.

Pandikar did not defend his Tempasuk seat to make way for Umno's Musbah Jamli. Pandikar will have to be appointed a senator before being made a federal minister.

Asked about his meeting with State Ministers and Assistant Ministers yesterday, the Prime Minister said it was held to discuss the role of the Cabinet and the system of government to apply in the State

administration.'

On newspaper reports that a gaming company had been issued a licence to operate a four-digit business in Sabah, the Prime Minister said:

"No, I think I have to look into this. I do not think the Federal Government has approved (the licence). However, there might be some legal complication which we will look at.

"The Federal Government is with the State Government in not wanting any additional gaming outlets (in Sabah)."

Diriwan Corporation was recently reported to have obtained a court order to enable it to apply for a business licence in Sabah. The company needs a trading licence from the local authority before it can set up outlets here.

Sabah at present has about 100 gaming outlets managed by the Sandakan Turf Club and Peninsula-based Sport Toto.

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