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PM: Rotation of Chief Minister's post to continue

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Leaders of the three main communities in Sabah will continue sharing the post of Chief Minister should the Barisan Nasional win the impending election.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who expressed confidence that BN would win in Sabah, said today the coalition would stick by its promise in 1994 of rotating the post.

The Prime Minister added that the system now in place was ideal for Sabah where there was no single dominant group as no one community had the strength to be the majority.

"The strength is spread among three communities and we are prepared to give all three a role in ruling Sabah," Dr Mahathir told reporters on his return from an overseas trip, during which he attended the G15 meeting in Jamaica and made stopovers in London, Paris and Jordan.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was among those at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang to welcome him back.

The Prime Minister who would assess the election preparations and the stance of BN component parties on matters like choice of candidates in a three-day visit to Sabah from Thursday, said the rotation system had worked well.

It had also resulted in more progress, he added.

Dr Mahathir said in a visit soon after BN took office in 1994, Kota Kinabalu came across as a town in one of the least developed countries suffering from poorly-lit and maintained roads. The Prime Minister was commenting on whether BN would retain the rotation system.

After forming the Sabah Government, the BN appointed Tun Sakaran Dandai as Chief Minister representing Muslim Bumiputeras. When Sakaran became Yang di-Pertua Negeri, he was succeeded by Datuk Salleh Said Keruak.

Then, Datuk Yong Teck Lee from the Chinese community took over, followed by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, representing the non-Muslim Bumiputeras. Dompok, a Kadazandusun, was appointed Chief Minister in May last year. Kadazandusun is the biggest group among the non-Muslim Bumiputeras.

Elaborating on the concept of BN governance of Sabah, Dr Mahathir also alluded to an opposition party's belief that only one community had the right to rule the State which he said was narrow.

On speculation that a major opposition party would be accepted into BN after the polls, Dr Mahathir said this was not true.

"We had accepted it before (Parti Bersatu Sabah left BN in 1990)," he said, adding that the party's stand was to be part of BN only if beneficial to it.

"Now, it believes it may be beneficial (to join BN) if it claims that it will be accepted into BN if it wins," Dr Mahathir said.

On PBS' forecast that it would take Sabah, the Prime Minister said: "They can make claims ... we (BN) will win this election."

On a related subject, the Prime Minister expressed disappointment at the use of anti-Federal sentiments in the run-up to the election which highlighted the need for politicians to be responsible.

In certain countries, there would riots when politicians do things like fanning sentiments, he said.

Among the Opposition, there were those who were once so close to the Federal view that they were willing to hand over territory to the Federal Government.

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