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Mahathir-Rotation

ROTATING CHIEF MINISTERSHIP STAYS, SAYS PM

KOTA KINABALU, May 14 (Bernama) -- The current system of rotating the Sabah chief ministership between leaders of the three main communities in the state will go on, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Yes, we promise to rotate... we keep our promise," he said at a press conference here before returning to Kuala Lumpur after a two-day visit to Sabah.

He was asked about a Sabah Wanita Umno resolution calling for the abolition of the system.

"That's an Umno resolution... we don't know yet the resolutions of the others," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, had recently indicated that he would review the system if most people in Sabah so wished.

Asked how the people in Sabah could express their views on the issue, Dr Mahathir said: "There are many ways and I'm sure they know... I don't have to teach them."

The prime minister first mooted the system prior to the 1994 state election to enable leaders of Sabah's Muslim Bumiputera, Chinese and non-Muslim Bumiputera to be at the helm of the state government for two years each.

Umno inaugurated the system with Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai (now Tun) being appointed chief minister in March 1994.

Datuk Salleh Tun Said then succeeded him in December the same year after Sakaran was appointed Yang Dipertua Negeri.

Datuk Yong Teck Lee, representing the Chinese community, then took over from Salleh in May 1996 and Yong was subsequently succeeded by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok in May last year representing the non-Muslim Bumiputera.

Following the state election last March, state Umno liaison chief Datuk Osu Sukam was made the new chief minister to represent the Muslim Bumiputera after Dompok lost his seat in Moyog.

Osu's appointment marked the new cycle for the system and after two years at the helm he will be succeeded by a non-Muslim Bumiputera leader to serve for about a year to complete Dompok's remaining term.

Asked about the position of Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) president Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia, Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional would make good its promise to Pandikar Amin.

"We promise that we will appoint him to the Federal cabinet in place of Datuk Chong Kah Kiat (who resigned as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department to contest in the recent state election). We will do that," said Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman.

Pandikar Amin did not contest in the last state election to make way for an Umno candidate Musbah Jamli to contest in Tempasuk.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the federal government's stand on minimising gaming in Sabah was similar to that of the state government.

-- BERNAMA

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