

15 MAR 1999

Mahathir-OSU

SABAH NEEDS UMNO LEADERSHIP TO FACE GENERAL ELECTION- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Sabah Umno head Datuk Osu Sukam was appointed Chief Minister because the Barisan Nasional feels the state government should be led by Umno when facing the general election due by April next year.

Dr Mahathir said Umno had received strong support from the Sabah people and had the capacity to bring about development and implement projects in the state.

Osu was also appointed Chief Minister because Tan Sri Bernard Dompok could no longer remain Chief Minister as he was defeated in the state election, he added.

"We decided that a Kadasan should be second in line under the rotation system and not at the beginning," he told a news conference after leading the Malaysian delegation in talks with visiting Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski.

Dr Mahathir said the rotation system would continue with Umno taking over the Chief Ministership for two years and then followed by the Parti Democratic Sabah (PDS) and then the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) or a candidate from a Chinese party.

Umno contributed 24 of the 31 seats won by the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the Sabah election which ended on Saturday. Dompok head of the PDS was defeated in Moyog.

Osu was sworn in as Sabah's 11th Chief Minister before Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai at Istana Negeri in Kota Kinabalu today.

Dr Mahathir said Osu's appointment as Chief Minister had been accepted by leaders of all component parties at a meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Kota Kinabalu yesterday.

"I received a report from my deputy on the discussions yesterday. They obtained the views of all leaders of BN component parties and they accepted the decision unanimously," the Prime Minister said.

Asked whether the appointment of Osu meant Umno would hold the Chief Ministership after each state election, Dr Mahathir said not necessarily so.

"We faced a small problem because the PDS representation in the government is weak as Dompok was not elected. We need a strong government and so we gave the post to Umno," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if Dompok had been re-elected by the people of Moyog, he would have surely been reappointed Chief Minister even if the PDS had won only two or three seats as he had the experience and is the Chairman of the Sabah Barisan Nasional.

-- BERNAMA

AR AAM