

Up to Barisan parties to decide on rotation of Sabah CM's post

By EDDY LOK

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it is up to the nine Sabah Barisan Nasional parties to decide if they want to continue the system of rotating the chief minister's post.

Responding to criticism of the controversial system implemented in 1994 after BN took over the reins of government from Parti Bersatu

Sabah (PBS), the Prime Minister said the system had worked well so far.

Contrary to criticisms that the system had been disruptive to the administrative machinery and services, there had in fact been continuity in the business of governing Sabah whenever a new Chief Minister took over, he added.

"I leave it to the Sabah parties and people to resolve the issue. If they are comfortable, then fine, if

they want to change, it is also up to them," he told a press conference after opening the sixth United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (Upko) congress here.

Under the system, a Chief Minister from one of the three main communities in Sabah - Muslim Bumiputra, non-Muslim Bumiputra and Chinese - serves a two-year in rotation.

Current Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam's term ends in March

next year and this has triggered speculation on who will succeed him.

Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said the Kadazandusuns could also be represented by other parties apart from UPKO whose members included other races. Even in Umno, there are Kadazandusun members, he added.

He also said he found that the political situation in Sabah had increasingly stabilised under BN.

"Sabah *politicians have also showed more maturity. In the past, they entered politics for their own interests... now, they have this desire to do something for the people," he added.

Asked whether he had any plans for a Cabinet reshuffle, Mahathir laughed it off but said he did not have any for the moment. "Sometimes, it (reshuffling) crosses my mind, sometimes, it doesn't," he added (see *also Page 2*).

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