

# NEW SABAH CM

**STAR**

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## LDP's Chong takes over under modified rotation system

By NICK LEONG and FOO YEE PING

**KUALA LUMPUR** Sabah Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat will replace Datuk Osu Sukam as the chief minister of the state on Monday under a modified rotation system

Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who made the announcement yesterday said the rotation system would be continued with a little amendment

We will maintain the system but because Umno is the biggest party in Sabah (among the state Barisan Nasional component parties) it will hold the chief ministership twice compared to non-Muslim bumiputra and Chinese parties he said after chairing the Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting

The appointment put to rest weeks of speculation about who would take over from Osu whose term ends tomorrow

Osu the Sabah Umno liaison committee chief was appointed Chief Minister after the last general election in 1999

Under the system practised by Sabah's Barisan Nasional the chief minister's post is rotated among Barisan component parties representing the three major communities in the state — Muslim bumiputras non-Muslim bumiputras and Chinese

The system was implemented as part of the pledge made by

the state Barisan in its manifesto for the 1994 state election. The objective was to ensure that power is shared by all three communities in the state

Since recently however the system has been criticised by some quarters as not reflective of the strength of the communities and that the chief ministers were made to appear as if they were lame ducks

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# Sabah Cabinet likely to see minimal changes

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Dr Mahathir said he would discuss the new Sabah Cabinet line up with Chong adding that all Sabah Barisan component parties accepted the decision including the state Umno liaison committee

Sabah Barisan comprises United Pasok Momogun Kadamandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) LDP Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) and Umno

Chong who is state Tourism Development Environment Science and Technology Minister pledged to carry out his duties to the best of his ability with the support of all groups

I want to make sure the state moves forward and continues to be strengthened by all Barisan component parties he said

He said his appointment was not just to represent the Chi

nese community in Sabah

It is not a question of changing seats It is a question of every race in Sabah having a role to play

The point is to ensure all component parties and races can contribute positively

Chong said he would discuss the new line up with Dr Mahathir who would visit Sabah on March 24

Sabah Barisan leaders believe there will be minimal changes to the state Cabinet

They expect the present composition of six Umno two Upko and two SAPP representatives to be maintained

The leaders however expect swaps in portfolios with a possibility of PBRS strengthened by the entry of six assemblymen being given a portfolio

LDP has two members in the 48 seat Sabah state assembly Besides Chong the other LDP assemblyman is Karamunting representative Wong Lien Tat