

Mixed feelings over new formula

STAR

18 MAR 2001

■ By MUGUNTAN VANAR

KOTA KINABALU Some are happy Some are disappointed Sabah politicians returned home from Kuala Lumpur with mixed feelings

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad decided on the mandate given to him by Sabah Barisan leaders on Friday by naming LDP president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat as the 12th Sabah chief minister

Chong and his new Cabinet of 10 will take the oath of office after Sabah Umno chief Datuk Osu Sukam submits his resignation letter to the Yang di Pertua Negeri in accordance with the Constitution

Dr Mahathir kept to his 1994 elections promise He told the Sabah leaders that the two year system of rotating the chief minister would continue albeit with a modified format

Instead of one community's representative serving one after another for two years Umno's Muslim representative would now serve alternate terms in office

Under the modified system a Kadazandusun representative has to wait four more years before getting another chance

Naturally the feeling was one of dejection among Kadazandusuns at the KK airport

when Upko president Tan Sri Bernard Dompok came back from Friday's meeting

Dompok who gave up the chief minister's office when he lost the Moyog seat in the 1999 elections after serving only 10 of his 24 months did not say how he felt

Our community has no reason to fear that this Government will not do good for them The BN government is very sincere in this

We have to ensure what is due to the Kadazandusun people will be delivered to them said Dompok the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department

PBRs another Kadazandusun and Murut based Barisan party too was not in the mood for celebrations despite recently boosting its standing in the state assembly with the entry of six PBS leaders led by Datuk Jeffrey Kitingan the brother of opposition PBS leader Datuk Joseph Parin

It is hard for us to explain But we believe the Prime Minister looked at the political scenario in Sabah and the nation We must use our heads and not be ruled by emotions said PBRs chief Tan Sri Joseph Kurup who was still in Kuala Lumpur yesterday

SAPP welcomed the appointment of a Chinese repre

sentative but were in subdued mood over the dilution of the original power sharing recipe

However its president Datuk Yong Teck Lee who was the rotated chief minister for 1996-98 period supported the decision

We accept the new concept We will have to wait and see how it unfolds on the ground said Yong who stayed back in Kuala Lumpur to attend tomorrow's opening of the Parliament session

Dompok Kurup and Yong were all former PBS leaders

Until they came together under the Barisan team in 1994 Chong was seen as a Berjaya man of Datuk Harris Salleh while Chong's people saw the three as PBS graduates

Chong's LDP had been a Barisan partner earlier than them After PBS pulled out of Barisan in 1990 LDP joined Umno in Barisan with Parti Akar headed by Datuk Pandi

kar Amin Mula who has said that his party had no problems with any decision made by Dr Mahathir

Sabah Umno members who were confident that the rotation would be scrapped now say something is better than nothing

We did not get all We did not lose all said Sabah Umno Information head Datuk Karim Ghani

The political backers of outgoing Osu held back outbursts Etched in their minds till Friday's announcement was a near certain thought that their boss would remain in office despite moves by some Umno divisions to replace him after the rotation was scrapped

Chong returned to a rousing welcome at the airport yesterday afternoon as his supporters were happy that their years with a party once branded as a mosquito had produced a chief minister

The implications of Dr Mahathir's new arrangement of power sharing for the Muslim bumiputras Chinese and Kadazandusuns would only be seen in time

For the state Umno leaders it could be immediate — current Umno branch meetings leading up to division elections

We anticipate more division chiefs to be challenged I won't be surprised if someone takes on Osu in his Papar division said a senior Umno leader

As for the other Sabah Barisan component leaders they have to start explaining to their supporters from now till the next 2004 state elections as to how the new power sharing formula would benefit each community

Otherwise Sabah would be waiting for another round of pendulum swing in which no party has remained in power for more than nine years