

'People of Sabah have accepted modification to rotation system'

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KOTA KINABALU Sun — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the modification to the rotation system for the Sabah Chief Ministership has been widely accepted by the people of the State.

Under the modified formula Umno, the dominant partner in the State Barisan Nasional Government, will hold the Chief Minister's post alternatively with a leader from the non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese community.

Dr Mahathir said after incoming Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kit has completed his two-year term, a leader from Umno will take over from him followed by a non-Muslim Bumiputera leader.

Introduced when the BN took over the State administration in 1994, the rotation was originally to enable the three main communities in Sabah to take turn at being Chief Minister every two years.

Speaking at a press conference at the airport here before leaving for Kuala Lumpur after a two-day official visit to the State, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and BN chairman, said Sabah Umno had also accepted the new formula.

They (people of Sabah) seem very happy (with the new formula) they did not raise any problem at

all. I think they have accepted no one raised any questions at all even from Umno, he said.

Asked if there was a time frame for the implementation of the rotation system, Dr Mahathir said it would depend on the response from the people.

On whether the rotation system would be included in the BN manifesto for the next State election, he said a decision on the matter would be made when the time comes.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the Kadazandusun community should not complain because a leader from the community was not appointed to replace outgoing Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam.

He said if the Kadazandusun wanted a leader from the community to become Chief Minister, they should have voted for Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, who was the incumbent Chief Minister when Sabah went to the polls in 1999.

Apparently, they (Kadazandusun) did not want him (Dompok) because they did not vote for him, so they cannot complain now they were given a very good chance, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he even came to Sabah to campaign for Dompok during the 1999 election, but the

Kadazandusun chose to vote for the Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan led Parti Bersatu Sabah.

Obviously, they (Kadazandusun) think that Pairin was the likely Chief Minister, so they voted for him and it was a waste of votes because all the senior Kadazandusun leaders in the BN lost, he said.

It has been reported that several Kadazandusun-based BN component members were disappointed that a leader from the community was not appointed as the new Chief Minister.

On the dismissal of an application by three businessmen for an injunction to restrain Chong from being sworn in as the new Chief Minister, Dr Mahathir said to him the decision was appropriate.

Their action was frivolous and baseless; they just want to create problems, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had already spoken to Chong on the formation of the new Sabah Cabinet.

However, he declined to reveal the composition of the cabinet, saying that it was up to Chong to decide.

On the role to be given to Osu after he had completed his two-year term as Chief Minister, Dr Mahathir said he would think about it.