

Announcement on rotation system for CM next month

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By Joniston Bangkuai

KOTA KINABALU, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said an announcement on whether or not to continue with the rotation system for the post of Sabah Chief Minister will only be made after getting the views of all Barisan Nasional component party leaders in the State.

He said he had so far met with Sabah Umno leaders and would be meeting the other Sabah BN component party leaders soon.

"I will be inviting them to Kuala Lumpur and will meet them one by one to get their views (on the rotation system)," Dr Mahathir told a Press conference before leaving for Kuala Lumpur after a two-day official visit to Sabah.

Dr Mahathir, who is the BN chairman, said he would make an announcement on the matter when the time comes for Chief Minister Datuk Seri Osu Sukam to relinquish the post next month.

Osu was sworn in as Sabah Chief Minister on March 13 under the system to rotate the post among leaders from the Muslim bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese communities.

Asked whether the next Chief Minister would be a Chinese or Kadazandusun, Dr Mahathir said he would be a Malaysian.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

'I don't see any problem identifying Osu's successor'

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Badawi had said after the State election in March 1999, that a leader from the Kadazandusun community would replace Osu after his two-year term expires.

Introduced after the BN took over the State administration in 1994, the rotation system paved the way for a Muslim bumiputera, non-Muslim bumiputera and Chinese to take turns being Chief Minister every two years.

Asked about Sabah Umno's views on the rotation, Dr Mahathir said he could not reveal them just yet.

On whether he faced a problem identifying Osu's successor, Dr Mahathir said he did not because the Sabah BN "would not do anything that would be detrimental to the interest of Sabah".

On the suggestion made by some Umno leaders to avoid an election contest at the divisional level in order to maintain party unity, Dr Ma-

hathir said, "A contest is, of course, very democratic, but on the other hand we find some people who cannot accept the result of a contest.

"If they lose, then they become very undemocratic and that is the problem."

Dr Mahathir said a contest would not be a problem if the loser accepts defeat and supports the winner by closing ranks after the election.

"But there is a tendency in some places (for losers) to take action that is detrimental to unity in the party," he said.

It would be better, he said, if discussions could be held to find a solution and to determine who should be the leader.

On whether Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud had informed him about calling a State election before the current term of the State Assembly expires in September, Dr Mahathir said, "You ask him."