

Sabah BN chiefs to meet Dr M today on CM rotation

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By Joniston Bangkuai

PAPAR, Tues. — Sabah Barisan Nasional component party leaders are scheduled to have separate meetings with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow to give their views on the rotation system of the Sabah Chief Ministership.

The Sabah BN component party leaders are expected to meet Dr Mahathir before the Prime Minister meets Chief Minister Datuk Seri Osu Sukam, who is State Barisan Nasional and Sabah Umno chief.

A check by the *New Straits Times* revealed that most of the State BN component party leaders left for Kuala Lumpur this afternoon for the meeting.

Dr Mahathir had told a Press conference at the end of his two-day visit to the State yesterday that he would be inviting all the Sabah BN component party leaders to Kuala Lumpur for separate meetings with him on the rotation issue.

The Prime Minister also said that he would make an announcement on the matter when the time comes for Osu to relinquish the post next month.

Osu's two-year term under the system to rotate the post among the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese ends on March 13.

The rotation system was introduced by the BN after it took over the State administration in April 1994.

Osu, when met by reporters after he witnessed the

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swearing-in of newly appointed councillors of the Papar District Council, here, today, confirmed that he would be meeting Dr Mahathir tomorrow.

"My meeting with the Prime Minister is to follow up on matters raised during his (Dr Mahathir's) visit to Sabah," he said when asked if the rotation is expected to be discussed in his meeting with the Prime Minister.

On the meeting between Dr Mahathir and the other Sabah BN component party leaders, Osu said the meeting was expected to take place as soon as possible.

On whether he had conveyed his views on the rotation to Dr Ma-

hathir, he said after a State BN meeting some times ago he met Dr Mahathir to brief him on the issue.

The State BN comprises Umno, United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs), Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar), Liberal Democratic Party, Sabah Progressive Party, MIC, MCA and Gerakan.

It is learnt that the Prime Minister will only meet with leaders of Sabah-based BN component parties — Upko, PBRs, Akar, LDP and SAPP.

Upko, headed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, and PBRs, by former Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Joseph Kurup, are both Kadazandusun-based parties.

The majority of Akar members are Kadazandusun although it is headed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia, a Muslim.

SAPP and LDP, which are headed by former Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee and Minister of Tourism Development, Environment, Science and Technology Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, respectively, are both Chinese-based parties.

Going by a statement by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when announcing Osu's appointment as Chief Minister in March 1999, the next Chief Minister would be from the Kadazandusun community.

However, the possibility of a Chinese leader being appointed to succeed Osu could not be discounted.