

Wind of change

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'Lame duck' chief ministers from Sabah's rotation system, says Mahathir

■ By SA'ODAH ELIAS
and MUGUNTAN VANAR

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is considering changing the two-year leadership rotation system in Sabah because it tends to create "lame duck" chief ministers.

"Although we can still live with such weaknesses, we need to consider the problems and find a solu-

tion for the sake of Sabah's future," the Prime Minister told reporters after launching the information and communications technology (ICT) literacy for knowledge-based economy programme here yesterday.

However, he did not say whether the consideration involved scrapping the system altogether or only a change to allow for a longer rotation period.

While several quarters in Sabah reportedly wanted the rotation system to be abolished, some argued that it should be maintained.

A Barisan component party leader on Thursday had proposed that the period of rotation be stretched to five years, instead of the current two.

It was introduced in 1994 to allow Muslim bumiputra, non-Muslim bumiputra and Chinese leaders

in Sabah to take turns to be chief minister.

The two-year tenure of Datuk Osu Sukam as chief minister representing the Muslim bumiputras expires in middle of next month.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chief, said he was awaiting the views of state BN leaders on the matter in black and white.

He had met at his office last Wednesday Tan Sri Bernard Dom-

pok (Upko), Datuk Chong Kah Kiat (LDP), Tan Sri Joseph Kurup (PBRs), Datuk Yong Teck Lee (SAPP), Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia (Akar) and Osu, who is state Umno liaison committee chief.

Dr Mahathir said that while all of them gave him the mandate to decide on rotating the chief minister's post, they also conveyed

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their personal views on the matter.

"They did not totally leave it to me. They also stated their terms. On top of that they also gave me their mandate," he said.

He drew comparison between the leadership rotation system in Sabah to the tenure of the American president.

He said the situation was not unlike that in the United States where a president who was into his second term of office was considered a lame duck leader of the country.

"The people just don't care much with what he does as they are just waiting for him to be replaced by someone else," he said.

Asked if the move would be

seen as Sabah Umno being "greedy" in not wanting to share the post with other component parties, Dr Mahathir said the issue did not arise.

Sabah Umno, he said, was quite flexible with regards to the issue and the on-going discussions on the matter was to look for a better solution so that the state government would become more effective.

In Kota Kinabalu, Osu said any decision by Dr Mahathir on the matter would be "a straight-forward one."

"It will be whether the rotation is on or off, that's all," he told reporters after opening the Sunset Esplanade on Friday night.

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