

17 MAR 2001

Chong-CM

CHONG TO BE SWORN IN END OF THE MONTH

KOTA KINABALU, March 17 (Bernama) -- Sabah Chief Minister-designate Datuk Chong Kah Kiat is expected to be sworn in at the end of this month.

He said the swearing-in ceremony is expected to be held after the two-day visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Sabah on March 24 and 25.

No date has been fixed for the ceremony, he told reporters on arrival at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport from Kuala Lumpur today.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president was yesterday named as the 12th Chief Minister of Sabah, succeeding Datuk Osu Sukam, who had completed his two-year term as chief minister, under the rotation system.

The 53-year-old Chong was the Minister for Tourism Development, Environment, Science and Technology in Osu's cabinet.

Chong also said he would meet Dr Mahathir again next week to decide on the composition of the state cabinet.

"We had a preliminary discussion on the matter (cabinet line-up) but I will be seeing the Prime Minister again sometime next week to finalise the cabinet line-up," he said.

He hoped the state cabinet members would also take their oath of office on the same day with him.

Asked whether there would be a major reshuffle to the present cabinet line-up, Chong said: "there'll be quite an interesting and significant changes...there will be some changes."

On whether the finance portfolio would be filled, he said many people were keen on the post but "we'll choose a suitable person for the job."

"...There will also be re-positioning of cabinet members," he said.

Osu himself held the finance minister's portfolio in his cabinet.

Asked on new faces and whether Osu would be part of the state cabinet, he said this would be decided later.

Chong, who is also the assemblyman for Kudat, said he had not met Osu since he was named as the next chief minister by Dr Mahathir yesterday afternoon.

"Both of us attended many functions in Kuala Lumpur. I hope I can see him after this," he said.

He also hoped that the Bumiputera and Kadazandusun communities would continue to support the Barisan Nasional (BN) although their leaders were not chosen for the chief minister's post.

"I believe what is important in BN is perserverance and not merely to focus on one position. I believe the Kadazandusuns will continue to support the BN," he said.

He pledged to serve to the best of his ability to the state and its people.

-- BERNAMA

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