

07 FEB 2001

Sabah-Rotation

CINTANUSA SENDS MEMORANDUM FOR ABOLITION OF ROTATION SYSTEM

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 7 (Bernama) -- An action committee -- Kumpulan Belia Pencinta Nusa (Cintanusa) -- today decided to send a memorandum to the Yang Dipertua Negeri, Tun Sakaran Dandai, to demand for the abolition of the rotation system for the Chief Minister's post.

Zulkarnain Mahdar, chairman of Cintanusa, a youth pressure group, said the eight-page memorandum would be submitted to Sakaran on Friday, at the latest.

A similar memorandum would also be handed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his visit to the state scheduled to begin on Sunday, he said at a press conference today.

"Based on the feedback received so far, the majority of Sabahans reject the rotation system for the post of Chief Minister," he said.

In addition, the action committee would launch a campaign to obtain the signatures of the people throughout the state to seek their support, he said.

"Our target is to get at least 150,000 signatures from the people between now until March," he said.

Zulkarnain said the move was initiated following the recent statement by Dr Mahathir that he was still thinking whether the rotation system would be continued or otherwise.

"This gives the people of Sabah an opportunity to state their stand and we hope it could be demonstrated through their signatures as a sign of support," he said.

Zulkarnain also outlined the reasons supporting the committee's demand. Among them are:

+ The political situation now is not conducive to the rotation system for the Chief Minister's post. If the leaders and people of Sabah keep talking about the rotation system, not much development can be achieved. This is not only because the term is too short, the system has also become the focus or has attracted the attention of leaders and the people which affected the smooth running of the state administration.

* The reason given for maintaining the rotation system was merely political and not related to the economy. Businessmen and entrepreneurs who yearn for economic stability were affected because too much attention was being given to politics and the question of "Who will be the next Chief Minister."

* Every time there is a change of Chief Minister, there would certainly be a change in the cabinet, change of portfolios, government officers and those in the government agencies. This would certainly affect the implementation of whatever development programmes planned. The victims and target of such changes would be the people in the state.

Zulkarnain said even if the memorandum of the action committee was rejected, they would respect the decision of the Prime Minister including the extension of the rotation system for the Chief Minister's post.

The rotation system had been implemented since the Barisan Nasional (BN) took over the leadership of the state administration in March 1994.

The system enables the leaders of the three main ethnic groups -- Muslim Bumiputeras, Chinese and non-Muslim Bumiputeras -- to be appointed Chief Minister on a rotation basis, each for a two-year term.

Lately, however, several groups in Sabah felt that it was time that the system was reviewed to assess whether it should be continued or abolished.

The Chief Minister's post is being held by Datuk Osu Sukam who represents the Muslim Bumiputeras, and if the system is maintained, he only has two more months in office.

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-- BERNAMA

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