

10 MAR 2001

Osu-Rotation

OSU DENIES GETTING PM'S NOTE ON CHIEF MINISTER'S ROTATION

KOTA KINABALU, March 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Osu Sukam today denied talk that he has already received a letter from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad relating to the riddle-ridden Sabah's rotating chief ministership.

"I don't remember receiving a letter and even if there was one... definitely not on rotation," he said.

Osu told reporters this when approached on the matter after launching a Bahasa Melayu book "Sumbangan UKM Dalam Pembangunan Sabah" (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's contributions to Sabah's development) at the Sabah Foundation building here.

Asked whether Deputy Education Minister Datuk Aziz Shamsuddin called on him last Thursday, the Chief Minister said: "People come...some make courtesy call, others come to visit, many things transpired at such meetings but nothing about the rotation issue."

The talk in town was that Aziz brought along and handed over personally a letter from the prime minister to Osu that day.

Asked whether anxiety over the future of the rotating chief ministership was bothering him and affecting his daily routine, Osu said: "Not at all...I carry on doing my work as usual. We leave it to the prime minister to decide on the matter we shall abide by whatever decision he made."

Dr Mahathir said yesterday the interests of the people of Sabah and the development of the state would be the criteria in deciding whether to retain or discontinue the rotating system.

The interests of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition and its component parties would also be taken into account, the prime minister had said.

Dr Mahathir mooted the system which was later adopted in March 1994 after the BN won the state election that year.

The unique system enables leaders of the three main communities in Sabah -- the Muslim Bumiputera, the Chinese and non-Muslim Bumiputeras -- to take turn to be at the helm of the government for a two-year tenure.

Should the prime minister decide to retain the system, Osu, who is Sabah Umno liaison committee chief and representing the Muslim Bumiputera, has only about a week to go to complete his tenure.

-- BERNAMA

NT RYN