

15/03/2001

Osu to continue as CM until further notice

Joniston Bangkuai

KOTA KINABALU, Wed. - Datuk Osu Sukam, whose two-year tenure as Chief Minister ends tomorrow, said today he would continue with his duties as usual until further instruction from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"You will have to wait and see," Osu said after chairing a State Cabinet meeting today.

He was asked on whether the Prime Minister had informed him to continue serving as Chief Minister until a decision was made on the future of the rotation system.

Osu also gave a similar response when asked if the Cabinet meeting today would be his last.

Dr Mahathir had recently said that it was not a problem or unconstitutional for Osu to exceed the two-year term pending a decision on the rotation.

The rotation system among the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera (Kadazandusun) and Chinese was introduced in 1994 after Barisan Nasional took over the State from Parti Bersatu Sabah.

The Prime Minister had late last month met with Osu, who is Sabah Umno chief, and the heads of all the Sabah-based BN component members to get their views on the rotation.

Dr Mahathir had asked the respective heads of the Sabah-based BN component members to submit a written report to him on the matter.

The Sabah-based BN component parties are United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun-Murut Organisation (Upko), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS), Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar).

Upko and PBRS are Kadazandusun-based parties, while Sapp and LDP are Chinese-based parties. Akar is a Kadazandusun-based party but it is headed by a Muslim Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia.

Osu, 52, was sworn in as Sabah's ninth Chief Minister on March 15, 1999 after the BN won 31 of the 48 State seats in the State election.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had, when announcing Osu's appointment as Chief Minister, said a leader from the Kadazandusun community would replace Osu after he had completed his two-year term.

However, there had been calls from certain quarters for the system to be scrapped on the grounds that it would hamper development.

It was learnt that the State BN component members are divided with some against and some for the rotation to continue.