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Mahathir-Rotation

ROTATION: PM TO OBTAIN VIEWS OF ALL SABAH BN COMPONENT PARTY LEADERS

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he will meet Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) component party leaders to obtain their views on the system of rotation of the post of Sabah chief minister.

He said that separate meetings would be held in the federal capital and before the expiry of the tenure of the present chief minister, Datuk Osu Sukam.

"I have only met Sabah Umno leaders and I intend to meet the other leaders of BN component parties later on...I will be inviting them to come to Kuala Lumpur to meet them one by one to hear their views," he told reporters before leaving here after a two-day visit.

Asked whether the chief minister's post will be passed on to a leader from the non-Muslim Bumiputera community or the Chinese community, Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, jokingly said: "He will be a Malaysian".

Sabahans have anticipated that Dr Mahathir will make some indications, during his visit, on the rotation system since the term of the present chief minister will expire in March this year.

Asked on the views of Sabah Umno on the system, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said: "That is something that I can't reveal just yet".

The system was proposed by Dr Mahathir during the 1994 state election campaign and was implemented when the BN took over the state administration in March the same year.

The unique system is to enable the leaders of the three major communities in Sabah -- Muslim Bumiputera, Chinese and non-Muslim Bumiputera -- to head the state government, for a term of two years each.

Its implementation ran smoothly initially but lately several quarters have called for the abolition of the system while others are leaving it entirely to the prime minister to make a decision on the matter.

Asked whether there is some difficulty in making a decision on the matter, Dr Mahathir said that it was not a big problem.

"I think, by and large, the BN in Sabah is a strong organisation and they place priority on the interest of Sabah. As such, I cannot see them doing anything that will jeopardise the interest of Sabah," he said.

The prime minister was also asked on the advice of the Sabah Umno liaison body to as far as possible avoid contests at the Umno branch meetings next month and the Umno divisional meetings in April.

Dr Mahathir said: "Well, a contest of course is a very democratic process but on the other hand, we find some people could not accept the result of the contest. If they lose, then it will become very undemocratic and that is the problem.

"But if we are truly democratic, a contest is no problem because when you lose, you accept it and throw strength behind the winner. But there is tendency in some places when people contest and they lose, they cannot accept the decision...they tend to take action that is detrimental to the unity of the party."

As such, he said, it would be better for branches and divisions to reach a consensus in determining their leaders.

-- BERNAMA

JS RM