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Yong-Rotation

SAPP WANTS DECISION ON ROTATION SYSTEM BEFORE 2004 POLLS

KOTA KINABALU, Aug 26 (Bernama) -- The Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) wants the state Barisan Nasional (BN) to decide whether to continue with the present 2-1-1 formula for the chief minister's post before the next state election, due in 2004.

SAPP president Datuk Yong Teck Lee said his party would like to see a "substitute formula" in view of the difficulties encountered in the past in the smooth transfer of power.

The party would bring up the subject for discussion at the state BN before presenting its case at the national level, he said in his policy address at the party's 8th annual congress.

Under the rotation system for the chief minister's post introduced after the 1994 state election in line with a BN election pledge, the post is rotated among Muslim Bumiputeras, non-Muslim Bumiputeras and Chinese with a representative of each community holding it for a two-year term.

Yong said the SAPP had been consistent in its stand that the BN had no choice but to fulfil the election pledge as otherwise "the people would feel that the BN cannot be trusted".

All Sabah BN component parties had earlier submitted their views on the subject to the BN chairman, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who then declared that the rotation would continue with some changes.

Under the new 2-1-1 formula, the Muslim-Bumiputera representative will occupy the seat for two two-year terms while the non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese representatives will have one term each.

Yong said although the BN component leaders had accepted the formula, "it remains to be seen how the non-Muslim community really view this formula, and whether this formula can survive the test in year 2005".

"With the past difficulties encountered in the rotation of the Chief Minister from Umno to other races, it also remains to be seen whether the people really believe that Umno would give up chief minister's post again, for the third time in 2005," he said.

Yong said any reluctance by a future chief minister to step down under the rotation system would be a destabilising factor in Sabah politics, and that was why the matter needed to be decided upon early.

Apart from the rotation system, Yong also spoke on the party's non-racial politics which he described as being consistent with the Rukun Negara and Vision 2020.

-- BERNAMA

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