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Sabah-Rotation

PM'S STATEMENT WILL SOLVE SUCCESSION ISSUE - CHONG

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement that an Umno leader will replace him next month should settle the succession issue.

"The prime minister has clarified the matter and I feel it need not be prolonged. For me this issue is simple but some like to play it up."

He was speaking to reporters after attending the Yang Dipertua Negeri Datuk Ahmadshah Abdullah's Hari Raya Aidiladha open house at the Istana Negeri here today.

Yesterday Dr Mahathir said an Umno leader would replace Chong as the next chief minister after his term expires on March 27.

Chong said he had applied for a month's leave effective March.

"The prime minister who is also the Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman will decide on who will be the acting chief minister."

Chong is the sixth chief minister under the rotation system introduced in March 1994 when BN took over Sabah from the then Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS).

Meanwhile, several Sabah BN component party leaders described Dr Mahathir's move as an endorsement of what was agreed two years ago -- that Umno would take over the post once Chong's term is over.

Sabah Progressive Party President Datuk Yong Teck Lee said he was confident that a suitable candidate would be appointed to the post.

Yong said the current rotation system could be continued until it was completed when a Kadazandusun community leader takes over the post from the new Umno chief minister when his tenure ends.

"If it was stopped now it may cause dissatisfaction among those who are yet to be appointed to the post."

PBS President Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan said the party would abide by BN leadership's decision on the matter.

Pairin, the last Sabah chief minister before the system was implemented, said PBS hoped there would be discussions among the coalition members in the future to see if the system was constitutionally acceptable.

-- BERNAMA

JS VP