

04 MAR 2003

Mahathir-Musa

MUSA AMAN IS SABAH'S NEXT CHIEF MINISTER

KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 (Bernama) -- Sabah Umno liaison chairman Datuk Musa Aman will take over as Sabah Chief Minister from Datuk Chong Kah Kiat when the latter's term ends on March 27.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who made the announcement today said that the Yang Dipertua Negeri of Sabah, Datuk Ahmadshah Abdullah, had been informed of the matter.

He was speaking to reporters before leaving for Doha, Qatar, to attend the emergency meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Chong and Musa, who is Sabah Finance Minister, were among those present at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Subang, near here, to send him off.

Chong told reporters later that after the state cabinet meeting tomorrow he would hand over his duties to Musa who would be acting until he is sworn in as chief minister on March 28.

Musa's appointment is under the rotation system practised in Sabah after the Barisan Nasional (BN) took over the state government from Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) on March 17, 1994.

The first leader to be appointed chief minister under the rotation system was Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai (now a Tun) of Umno, who held the post until December 1994 when Datuk Salleh Tun Said took over following Sakaran's appointment as Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri.

Salleh was replaced by Datuk Yong Teck Lee, representing the Chinese community, who in turn was replaced by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok representing the non-Muslim bumiputera community.

Dompok, however, lost in the the 1999 election and the post reverted to a Muslim bumiputera through the appointment of Datuk Osu Sukam who was later replaced by Chong from the Chinese community.

The system underwent a slight change under Chong when it was decided that an Umno representative would alternate between the Chinese and non-Muslim bumiputera representatives in holding the chief ministership.

Congratulating Musa, Chong said the prime minister's choice was apt and logical as Musa was a state liaison chief of Umno, an important political party not only in Sabah but also at the national level.

He said he had known Musa as a politician and also a corporate figure for about 15 years.

"I have full confidence in him. He has vast experience not only in running the state government but also in the corporate sector," he said.

Chong believed that Musa could work well with all the leaders to discharge his duties in an outstanding manner.

He also thanked Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the state cabinet ministers and other community leaders who had given him their cooperation during his tenure.

Meanwhile, Musa told reporters that he would continue with Chong's policies to develop Sabah and had no problem in this because of the cooperation between them.

He also thanked Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for their confidence and support and promised to do his best to develop Sabah.

-- BERNAMA

AZH MUN KHY RON