

20 NOV 2003

Salleh-Rotation

SABAH UMNO TO DISCUSS NEW POWER-SHARING FORMULA WITH BN PARTNERS

KOTA KINABALU, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- Sabah Umno will initiate discussions with other the State Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties soon to seek views on a possible new arrangement of power-sharing in efforts to resolve once and for all the issue of rotating the Chief Minister's post.

The Deputy Chairman of the State Umno Liaison Committee, Datuk Salleh Tun Said, said the State Umno would deliberate on the matter after the Hari Raya and subsequently hold a meeting with the Sabah BN leaders.

He said there was a need to hold the discussion as the new Prime Minister had given the State BN "the room" to decide the future of the rotation system.

"Now this has become Sabah's affair, it no longer has to be referred the (national) BN leadership. As a responsible party and the backbone of the ruling State Government, Umno will initiate the discussions...we have to resolve the issue once and for all," he told a news conference at Wisma Tun Fuad here today.

On Monday, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that the BN leadership had not decided whether to continue or discontinue the two-year rotation system for the Chief Ministership.

Abdullah, who is also BN chairman, said he would not interfere in the matter but would leave it to the Sabah BN leaders to reach a consensus.

"We should solve this issue before the coming State elections...we should not hide this from the people of Sabah. There has to be a new arrangement for power-sharing and we will discuss this with our friends in the BN," he said.

Salleh, who is the State Minister of Local Government and Housing, said there was a need to have a re-look at the suitability of the rotation system under the present political scenario in the State after it had been implemented for almost 10 years.

"The spirit of the rotation system is to share power to be fair to all communities. So, is it possible to be fair to all communities and to share power without rotating the Chief Minister's post? This is the issue that needs to be discussed," he added.

"We must bear in mind that the rotation system is a BN political arrangement and not in the State constitution and that's why there is no need for a referendum...the State BN alone can decide on it," he said.

"Our priority is to develop the State further as stressed by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman in his "haltuju" agenda to ensure that Sabah moved ahead without abandoning the sharing of power concept and to be fair to all communities," he said.

The rotation system, mooted by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is practiced in Sabah since the BN formed the State Government in March 1994.

It was to give opportunities to leaders of the three major communities in Sabah -- the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and the Chinese -- to lead the State on a two-year rotational basis.

The system, however, underwent a slight modification in March 2001 to give prominence to Umno.

Under the modified system, a leader from the party would take over the Chief Minister's post after the term of a particular community ends.

The system has so far seen the appointment of seven Chief Ministers -- Tun Sakaran Dandai, Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak, Datuk Yong Teck Lee, Tan

Sri Bernard Dompok, Datuk Osu Sukam, Datuk Chong Kah Kiat and Datuk Seri
Musa Aman, the present Chief Minister.

-- BERNAMA

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