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`Scrap rotation system after current cycle'

KOTA KINABALU, Wed. - The Sabah Progressive Party has suggested that the system of rotating the Chief Minister's post be scrapped only after the current cycle is completed.

SAPP president Datuk Yong Teck Lee said the full cycle of the rotation system based on the agreed 2:1:1 formula allowed Umno to hold the post twice and the non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese one each.

He said the rotation's current cycle would end after a leader from the non-Muslim Bumiputera takes over from Umno as Chief Minister in March 2005.

Claiming that certain quarters had called for the rotation to be scrapped, Yong said it would be unfair to the non-Muslim Bumiputera who would be taking over from Umno if it (rotation) was stopped.

Yong was speaking at the open house of Yang di-Pertua Negeri Datuk Seri Ahmad Shah Abdullah at the Istana Negeri in conjunction with Hari Raya Aidiladha.

Introduced when the BN came to power in Sabah in 1994, the rotation system provides an opportunity for Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese leaders to assume the post of Chief Minister for a two-year term.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that a leader from Umno would take over from current Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat when his term expires next month, Yong said the statement did not come as a surprise.

He said it was decided during a meeting of all the State BN component parties two years ago that it would be Umno's turn after Chong had completed his tenure as Chief Minister.

"The statement by the Prime Minister was consistent with what was decided by the State BN component parties two years ago," Yong said.

Yong served as Chief Minister between 1996 and 1998 under the rotation system.

Meanwhile, Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan said his party would abide by whatever decision made by the BN leadership on the rotation.

"What we want to see is continued stability and smooth administration of the State," Pairin said.

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup said his party fully agreed that the next Chief Minister would be from Umno.