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CM's post: `Let State BN decide`

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KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Sabah Umno as the backbone of the State Barisan Nasional, should initiate discussion on whether or not to scrap the rotation of the Chief Minister's post.

Sabah Umno deputy chief Datuk Salleh Said said a meeting could then be held with component parties to seek their views on the matter.

"We will inform them about our stand once we make a decision at our own meeting. In principle, the other parties are also ready to re-look at the system. Instead of discussing it through the media, we should discuss it through a meeting.

"The rotation system was introduced almost 10 years ago as a promise to the people with the aim of sharing power among the different communities and to be fair to all.

"We need to seek the views of all quarters and in making a decision, we should not think of one party's interests alone. We should look at the overall interests of the State," he said.

Salleh, who is State Local Government and Housing Minister, was speaking at his office in Wisma Tun Fuad, here today.

The rotation of the post was mooted by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to ensure that representatives from the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese communities are given a chance to head the State on a two-year term each.

On Monday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was up to State BN component parties to decide whether they want the system to be scrapped or continued.

Salleh said the matter must be resolved before the State election is held.

"In general, many are ready for a new arrangement. Everyone is prepared to look at the system again. The political scenario in Sabah has changed. In the past, we had a major Opposition party in the form of PBS (Parti Bersatu Sabah) which is now with the BN.

"We should now start focusing on the development agenda outlined by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman and find ways to improve Sabah," Salleh, who also served as Chief Minister under the system, said.

Sabah Progressive Party deputy president Datuk Tham Nyip Shen said the rotation system had lived up to its functions and served its purpose.

Tham, who is Deputy Chief Minister, said leaders should make a decision on the matter and offer it to the people in seeking a fresh mandate once the elections are called.