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Musa Aman is Sabah CM (HL)

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Sabah Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Musa Aman will take over as Sabah Chief Minister when Datuk Chong Kah Kiat's term ends on March 27.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in making the announcement today, said that the Yang di-Pertua Negeri of Sabah, Datuk Seri Ahmadshah Abdullah, had been informed.

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

Chong and Musa, who is also Sabah Finance Minister, were among those present at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang, near here, to see Dr Mahathir off.

Musa's appointment is under the rotation system practised in Sabah since March 19, 1994, when the Barisan Nasional took over the State Government from Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS).

Bername also reports that at the same event, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi expressed the hope that BN leaders in Sabah, particularly from Umno, would co-operate fully with Musa.

He said Sabah Umno had proven its strength with its resounding success in the last election.

"I hope that with this appointment, Umno in Sabah and BN will give their support to him," he said at a Press conference at the Subang RMAF base.

On taking over as acting Prime Minister for two months beginning Thursday, Abdullah said he hoped to carry out the task well.

In Kota Kinabalu, Musa pledged to carry out his responsibilities to the best of his ability.

Thanking Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for their faith and confidence in him, Musa said he would do his best to uphold Umno and BN unity in the State. Speaking to reporters on arrival at Kota Kinabalu International Airport, Musa said he would seek Chong's advice on the administration of the State until the latter officially steps down.

"Chong and I have always enjoyed a very close working relationship in Government and I have always held him in high regard," said Musa.

He said his priorities would include strengthening Umno and BN unity, as this was essential for the State's continued development and progress.

"We will be having our next State election within a year and we must be fully prepared. To ensure a convincing victory for the BN, we must have full understanding and co-operation from everyone," he said.

BN component parties in Sabah pledged to fully support the incoming Chief Minister.

PBS deputy president Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili said his party believed Musa would add a new dimension to the administration of the State, given his successful corporate background.

Congratulating Musa on his appointment, Ongkili said the PBS was also sure that Musa would strengthen the foundation laid by his predecessors, especially in development and security, which were top priorities of the outgoing Chief Minister.

"The PBS will give Musa full support and provide whatever assistance is required to ensure his term of office adds another milestone to Sabah's development," Ongkili said.

Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee said Musa's record in the Government and the private sector showed that he was a

capable leader with extensive experience in economics and administration.

"SAPP has full confidence in Musa as the new Chief Minister and chairman of the State BN," he said.

Yong said Musa's appointment was timely as it would put to rest uncertainty in the State Government and politics.

"The people of Sabah can now concentrate on giving their full support and co-operation to the incoming Chief Minister," Yong said.

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup said Musa was the most appropriate choice to take over from Chong by virtue of his position as Sabah Umno chief.

Describing Musa as a moderate, Kurup said he had shown that he cared for all the communities in Sabah regardless of race and religion, which augured well for fostering a reliable unity.

In Kuala Lumpur, government and political leaders welcomed Musa's appointment.

BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said he hoped all component parties would accept Musa's appointment.

"He is the right choice and nobody should question his appointment."

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, said that Musa knew a lot about economics and would surely make Sabah prosper even further. "He is a very suitable choice."

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said Musa had a proven track record in State administration. "He is capable of bringing much development and progress to the State."