

06/03/2003

State Cabinet meets for final time under outgoing Chief Minister

KOTA KINABALU, Wed. - The State Cabinet today met for the last time under outgoing Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat.

Chong will be on leave from tomorrow until his two-year term as Chief Minister, under a unique system of rotating the post among the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and Chinese, ends on March 27.

While Chong is on leave, Chief Minister-designate Datuk Musa Aman will be acting until he is sworn in as the new chief executive of the State Government on March 28.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, before leaving for the Organisation of the Islamic Conference emergency summit in Doha, Qatar, announced Musa as Chong's successor.

Chong, who is also Tourism Development, Environment, Science and Technology Minister, said he would be making working trips to the Philippines and China to promote tourism and investment in Sabah during his absence.

Speaking at a post-Cabinet Press conference at his office here, Chong described the transfer of power as smooth and he expected all the State ministers to extend their full support and co-operation to Musa.

"Before the start of today's meeting, I congratulated Musa and expressed hope that all State ministers will give him solid support when he takes over as Chief Minister on March 28," he said.

With the exception of Local Government and Housing Minister Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak who is on leave and would only be back to work on March 8, all ministers were present at the meeting.

Chong hoped that all levels of the State administration, the State Barisan Nasional component parties and the people of Sabah would extend to his successor the same support that they have extended to him.

"In the past two years, the support and co-operation given to me was enormous and I believe this will continue when Musa takes over as the new Chief Minister," Chong said.

Asked if he expected Musa to make a Cabinet reshuffle, Chong said it was up to Musa to decide on his team.

"It (reshuffle) is not a problem in the BN. I feel when Musa takes over, he will decide on his team to face the next State elections," said Chong.

On whether he would remain in his Cabinet post after his term as Chief Minister had ended, Chong said if Musa needed him he was prepared to serve.

"Whether or not I am in or out of the State Government, I will continue to render my services to the State."

On whether he expected Musa to continue policies introduced during his term as Chief Minister, Chong said there were bound to be changes whenever a new Chief Minister came into office.

Chong said during his two-year tenure as Chief Minister he was satisfied with the result of his all-out war to rid the State of the perennial problem of illegal immigrants, illegal logging and fish bombing.