

15/02/2003

`Rotation system to stay for now'

Firdaus Abdullah; Shahrur Sayuthi

JOHOR BARU, Fri. - The rotation system of Chief Ministers in Sabah will be maintained for the time being and will only be scrapped if the people of Sabah were unanimous in their stand against the system, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We will have to weigh the matter seriously and I think this is not the right time to change (the rotation system); some say it should be maintained while others say it should be scrapped... so it is quite difficult at the moment," said Dr Mahathir who is also Barisan Nasional chairman.

Speaking at a Press conference after attending the ground-breaking ceremony of the Southern Integrated Gateway (SIG) here today, Dr Mahathir said eventually it was the people of Sabah who should make their choice.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, was asked to comment on suggestions by certain Sabah politicians, for the system to be scrapped.

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat's tenure as the leader of the State ends on March 27 and by virtue of the rotation system, the next Chief Minister would be a candidate from Umno Sabah.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he would consult his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi before making an announcement on who should replace Chong as the new Chief Minister.

On the war against Iraq, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was against any military strike on Iraq, even if the United Nations flashes the green light for an attack, because Kuala Lumpur does not believe in war as a solution to conflicts.

He added that Malaysia was in no position to protest as the matter was confined to the Security Council.

"We have no vote in the Security Council; therefore, we will not have to say yes or no but our stand is very clear - we are against war as a solution to conflicts," the Prime Minister said.