

Musa: We will fill cabinet post 'when the time comes'

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KOTA KINABALU: Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman is in no hurry to fill the post of deputy chief minister vacated by Tan Sri Chong Kah Kiat.

He said Chong's replacement could be any Barisan Nasional assemblyman, not necessarily from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) where Chong is an adviser.

"We have time and when the time comes (to fill up the post), we will think it over.

"I will discuss the matter (vacancy) with my colleagues in the BN and Umno," Musa said at a press conference on his arrival at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport yesterday.

Musa was in Kuala Lumpur attending a two-day conference to improve the public service delivery system.

In a show of support for the chief minister, a large crowd of state BN component party leaders, state ministers and assistant ministers welcomed him at the airport.

Among them were Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, Sabah Umno secretary Datuk Yahya Hussein, Sabah MIC chief Datuk V. Jothi and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah deputy president Datuk Ellron Angin.

Chong, 59, who was also the tourism, culture and environment minister, tendered his resignation from the Sabah cabinet on Friday. His resignation takes effect tomorrow.



Datuk Seri Musa Aman describes his relationship with Tan Sri Chong Kah Kiat as 'very good'

He had offered no reasons for his sudden decision to quit but the talk is that he had an uneasy working relationship with Musa.

Assistant Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Karim Bujang will temporarily oversee the running of the ministry.

"He (Karim Bujang) has the experience to manage the daily operations of the ministry for the time being," Musa said.

Tourism is one of the three main focus areas of the state's development agenda, along with agriculture and manufacturing.

Musa, who said he had no problems with Chong, is prepared to meet him.

"If there is a need to (meet), I

will call him."

Musa said it was not unusual for a cabinet member to quit, citing the example of Kalabakan assemblyman Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh, who stepped down as deputy chief minister in 1999.

On Chong's contention that he was resigning on a matter of principle, Musa said everyone, including himself and other BN leaders, had their principles.

Musa, who described his relationship with Chong as "very good", said they had no problems when discussing matters in the state cabinet.

Musa also said that BN's preparation for the general election would not be affected by Chong's resignation.