

SABAH UMNO ISSUE CLEARED: PM

LANGKAWI, Thurs. — The confusion over the appointment of Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba as Sabah Umno head has been cleared, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said that Encik Ghafar would head Sabah Umno until the process of setting up Sabah Umno had been completed, after which someone from the state would take over.

The Prime Minister and Umno president, who met Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun yesterday, told newsmen here: "I am convinced that he understands the matter and accepts it wholeheartedly."

And in Kota Kinabalu, Tun Mustapha said the misunderstanding had been resolved.

"I have received a clear explanation on the matter from both the Prime Minister and Encik Ghafar,"

he said.

Usno had said that it wanted Tun Mustapha to head Sabah Umno, and had sent a memorandum to Encik Ghafar which is believed to have expressed this wish.

Bernamea quoted Dr Mahathir as saying that he explained the situation to Tun Mustapha.

Dr Mahathir suspected that the confusion over Encik Ghafar's appointment was created by "people who want to stop Umno from going to Sabah."

Asked about the Usno memorandum, he said it was handed to Encik Ghafar.

"I don't know its contents," he added.

Tun Datu Haji Mustapha, speaking to reporters on his return to Kota Kinabalu from Kuala Lumpur, said the Prime Minister had told him that a Sabahan would head the

State Umno once the branch and divisional elections were completed.

Umno branch committees would be elected in Sabah in June and divisional committees in August, he said.

Tun Datu Mustapha said he would resign from Usno and join Umno during the Usno General Assembly on Feb 21.

He said he would hand over his resignation letter and application form to join Umno to Dr Mahathir.

All Usno members, except the 11 Usno assemblymen, would join Umno, Tun Mustapha said.

The 11 Usno assemblymen would make up a body to look after Usno, which will not be dissolved, after the general assembly, he added.

(Sabah laws disqualify state assemblymen from holding their seats once they switch parties.)