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Mahathir-Ghafar

DECISION ON GHAFAR'S RESIGNATION AFTER UMNO ASSEMBLY

From Wan A. Hulaimi

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VALLETTA (Malta), Oct 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he had to wait until next month's Umno general assembly before considering Deputy Prime Minister Encik Ghafar Baba's decision to resign from the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister said it was not proper for him to make a decision now as Ghafar was still keen on defending his post as deputy president of Umno and the outcome of the contest would have an effect on Ghafar's future.

Speaking to reporters today before leaving for Lanarka, Cyprus, for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Dr Mahathir said he would meet Ghafar when he returned to Kuala Lumpur.

Asked if, as a party president, he should support his deputy, Dr Mahathir said, "That is what people assume, but I am faced with a dilemma. If I were to support any candidate and he were to lose, it would be difficult for me to get the cooperation of the winner."--more

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Mahathir-Ghafar 2 Valletta

"The present problem is not as big as what happened in 1987 when we were really divided," he said.

He said Umno would be able to close ranks after the general assembly and become stronger.

Dr Mahathir hoped that Umno members would accept the decision of the party, unlike in 1987 when the losers refused to respect the outcome of the election.

He also said that he had evidence that certain quarters had used improper means, including bribery, to garner votes.

Dr Mahathir denied that under the present system the incumbent was stronger than the challenger.

"If there are people who want to challenge me, they can do so. If Tengku Razaleigh (Hamzah) was still in the party, he might want to challenge me and he might get support," he said.--Bernama WAH OS

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