

# No reason for me to step down, says Kedah PM: Decision at right

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said any decision on the position of the Kedah Menteri Besar would be taken at an appropriate time and an announcement would be made then.

"If I want to take action or make a decision which involves someone, I must talk to that person ... not talk to the Press, for example.

"If you ask me to state categorically if I will drop this or that person, I cannot do it until it is time for me to do so," he told a Press conference after opening the Congress of the World Association of Women Entrepreneurs today.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on news reports today that Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff may be dropped and former Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, who is now Kuah State Assemblyman, would replace him.

The speculation heightened after a meeting yesterday between the Prime Minister and Kedah Barisan Nasional MPs, State Assemblymen and Senators.

Dr Mahathir said: "It is not fair for me to make a statement to others about someone else. So, yesterday, I met the (Kedah) State Assemblymen, MPs and Senators and talked to them in general only."

Asked whether he would make a decision on the Menteri Besar's position soon, Dr Mahathir said: "No need to ask about it ... when the decision is to be made, we will make it. I do not want to comment on rumours."

The Prime Minister also had some comments on Press reports on the matter.

"Today, we see in the news that Datuk (Seri) Sanusi will become Menteri Besar. Thank you for informing me."

The *Utusan Malaysia* today carried a report in its front page about the position of the Kedah Menteri Besar with the headline: "Sanusi MB baru Kedah (Sanusi Kedah's new MB)."

## QUOTES

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— Dr Mahathir

**It's hard being a star ....**

— Osman

The report also carried a sub-head: "*Saya akan akur kehendak Dr Mahathir — Osman* (I will accept Dr Mahathir's wishes — Osman)."

Meanwhile, in Jitra, despite the speculation about his position, Osman appeared jovial when he appeared in public this morning, declaring: "It's hard

## Menteri Besar time

being a star ....

He had earlier officiated at the Kubang Pasu district-level "one village one product" day.

Osman was in a cheerful mood when reporters approached him for comments on the speculation that he would be stepping down and his post would be taken over by Sanusi.

He fielded questions from reporters calmly and at the end of the Press conference, he again said jokingly: "If I knew you were going to ask questions about my position, I would have talked about it in my speech."

Osman made no reference on the matter in his speech, concentrating instead on the "one village one product" concept.

He said he would not step down as Menteri Besar, adding that there was no reason for him to do so.

As far as he was concerned, he said, Dr Mahathir had never asked him to step down and that the Prime Minister wanted him to re-

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and BN chairman, said he gave his views on leadership within the party and that no leader, once elected, would remain forever.

"Change will continue to occur throughout the nation ... even at the national level, there can be changes."

Asked whether he had met Osman to discuss the latter's position as Menteri Besar, Dr Mahathir said he had yet to do so.

Asked whether the declaration yesterday by the Kedah political leaders to support the Prime Minister would make it easier for him to make a decision on the Kedah Menteri Besar's position, he said:

"In principle, everyone in the Barisan Nasional will accept the decision made by the party. As the spokesman for the party, if I make a decision as wanted by the party, then it would be accepted by the members ... this is party discipline.

"No one who came yesterday said they would not accept this or that ... all were willing to accept the decision."

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# Osman: Dr M still has trust in me to continue as MB

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main as Menteri Besar.

Pressed by reporters, he said: "I have told you there is no reason for me to resign unless the Prime Minister asks me to do so ... and he has never asked me to step down.

"Actually, some other people are talking about it, not the Prime Minister. That's the cause of all the speculation and I myself cannot stop it.

"Today, for instance, we see the newspapers making their own interpretations. What is clear to me is the statement made by the Prime Minister which was aired over TV3. I stand by that statement.

"That statement was clear that I will remain as Menteri Besar."

Asked to comment on the *Utusan Malaysia* report, Osman said: "I don't know. That's what was written by the newspaper, but when I followed the development over TV3 last night, the Prime Minister said I would remain as Menteri Besar.

"And that's all I know. The rest are just individual interpretations. One person interprets this way and another interprets differently ... I cannot comment on that (the interpretations).

"For me, I stand by the statement which came out of the Prime Minister's mouth which was aired over TV3. I consider that statement as the actual state-

## QUOTE

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ment of the Prime Minister.

"That means the Prime Minister still has the trust in me to continue to be the Menteri Besar.

"I would like to thank him very much for his confidence in me. As for the future, it is opened to everybody. I am not saying a person will remain forever in his position.

"As for now, I have been given the trust and I will continue to carry out the duties and responsibilities entrusted to me."

He said there were a lot of things to be done for the betterment of the people and "I will continue to ensure that they are carried out efficiently".

Osman also thanked those who had expressed their support for his leadership at yesterday's meeting.

"I think we should now get on with our jobs," he said.

Asked whether he considered the Prime Minister's statement yesterday as a signal for him to step down, he said there was no need for Dr Mahathir to do that.

"The Prime Minister has been talking about leader-

ship a long time ago and that all leaders are not permanent.

"As for me, I know that some people have been saying that the Prime Minister has given me a signal (to step down).

"But actually, there is no need for the Prime Minister to give a signal because he decides my appointment.

"The Prime Minister was not giving any signal. He only gave a statement of fact. I have no other comments. What the Prime Minister has said is clear enough," he added.

Asked whether he had contacted Dr Mahathir personally to obtain his views on the matter, Osman said there was no need to do that.

"Probably one day, I will see him to discuss development matters and other subjects, including this matter," he said.

Asked whether he wanted Dr Mahathir to inform him personally on his position, the Menteri Besar said he was made to understand by the elected representatives who met the Prime Minister yesterday that Dr Mahathir wanted to inform him per-

sonally.

"He (Prime Minister) said he did not want to inform me through a third party and I think the Prime Minister will not be doing it that way (telling him through a third party), knowing him."

Asked whether the State BN leaders were disunited in the issue, Osman said he did not think so.

He said as far as the party was concerned, the State Umno remained united and strong.

"There is no split because whatever happens, Umno must remain strong," he said.

Asked whether there were any State Umno leaders who did not support him, he said he did not know if there were.

Asked to comment on the pledge by the BN elected representatives at yesterday's meeting to support the Prime Minister and his decision, Osman said: "That's true. They support who the Prime Minister chooses and the Prime Minister has made his choice ..."

Asked why he did not attend yesterday's meeting after telling reporters earlier that he would, Osman said: "If I had said I would not attend the meeting, you would have asked me a lot of questions. So, I said I would attend ..."

Asked whether he was invited to the meeting, Osman said he was informed about it.