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LEAD Anwar-Yong

ANWAR SAYS YONG'S APPOINTMENT "BEFORE END OF WEEK"

KUALA TERENGGANU, May 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Yong Teck Lee is likely to be appointed as the new Sabah Chief Minister within this week.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who said this today, was confident the swearing-in ceremony could be held before the end of the week.

He said there were certain matters to be resolved first.

Anwar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had given him some general instructions to handle the appointment of Yong but on closer scrutiny he discovered there were still unresolved matters.

"I will try to contact PM in a day or two. Then only I will meet Yong Teck Lee," he told reporters after delivering the Darul Iman Lecture here.

Anwar was asked for his response to Dr Mahathir's statement in Tokyo yesterday that the way was cleared for Yong, currently a Sabah Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister, to be appointed as Chief Minister after the end of his court case.

Yong, who is the assemblyman for Likas, and four others pleaded guilty to a charge of taking part in an unlawful assembly in Kota Kinabalu in 1990 and were each fined RM1,000 by the magistrate's court yesterday.

Under the federal and state constitutions, an elected representative automatically loses his state or parliamentary seat only if he is fined RM2,000 or more.

Yong was recently named by Dr Mahathir to succeed Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak under a system to rotate the post among the leaders of Sabah's three main communities. It was promised by the Prime Minister during the 1994 state elections campaign.

Asked on the nature of the matters which have arisen, Anwar said: "This does not only involve the post of the Chief Minister but several other minor changes which I have to refer to the Prime Minister first."

The Deputy Prime Minister said he would discuss with Yong after getting the information directly from Dr Mahathir.

On the coming change in the Kedah chief ministership, Anwar said this would be made after the Prime Minister returned from his current visit abroad.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Osman Aroff has tendered his resignation to Dr Mahathir and is expected to be replaced by former Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid.

Asked to comment on the statement by a PAS leader that Umno had betrayed the Malays for 50 years, Anwar said Umno respected freedom of speech but it should not go over the limit.

He said the statement showed the arrogance of the PAS leader who completely did not respect the differences in views in Islam. -- BERNAMA

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