

25 MAR 1996

Kedah-MB

MEMO ON KEDAH MB'S POSITION "UNCALLED FOR"

KUALA LUMPUR, March 25 (Bernama) -- Several Umno leaders here today described as "uncalled for" the action taken by 22 Kedah state assemblymen in submitting a memorandum to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to retain the Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff.

Party Secretary General Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said the action was improper, and if there was any problem, they could have discussed it within the party.

"There is a party procedure... no need to create a fuss outside," he told reporters when commenting on the issue after the official opening of the new Parliament session by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar here.

In the memorandum submitted to Dr Mahathir last Friday, the state assemblymen said they opposed any move to appoint former Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid as the new Menteri Besar. Sanusi is the State Assemblyman for Kuah in Langkawi.

Asked whether the action by the assemblymen went against party discipline, he said: "We will look at it... it could be construed as a breach of party discipline."

He added that the party had discipline and a code of ethics, and all major decisions were made by Dr Mahathir, as president, or the Supreme Council.

Mohamed said he had yet to see the memorandum and was awaiting Dr Mahathir's instructions.

Umno Vice President Tan Sri Haji Muhyiddin Yassin said confidence should be placed in the Prime Minister to look at the problem.

"I don't think the Prime Minister has a narrow view of the issue, and I believe he will also consider any problem that may arise with it," he added.

The assemblymen should have met the Prime Minister and, if the issue involved the state leadership, it should be discussed behind closed doors with an open mind, he said.

Muhyiddin discounted pressures from any group that had prompted the assemblymen's action, which he said was, only to vent their feelings.

"Their views need not necessarily be agreed upon... the party president and the Supreme Council have the wisdom to consider whatever issue that crops up," he said.

Umno Youth deputy chief Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz said the action by the assemblymen was highly improper since only the party president had the prerogative of appointing the Menteri Besar.

Their action, if left unchecked, would set a "dangerous precedent" for the future, he added.

"They have no right to make any protest on the Menteri Besar's appointment," he said, adding that such action was against the earlier resolution taken by the Kedah State Umno Liaison Committee and the Umno elected representatives to refer Osman's position to Dr Mahathir.

Last year, the state liaison body and the elected representatives held discussions with Dr Mahathir on the issue.

Nazri then questioned why so much fuss was being created in the media over the issue.

He also said the issue was related to politics and if there was to be any memorandum it should have come from party divisional leaders who had

power at the grass-root level.

"State assemblymen are those nominated to represent their respective areas and do not represent those at the grass-root level," he added.

Meanwhile, Sanusi said he did not receive any invitation to the March 21 meeting.

Yesterday, Kedah State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Zainol Md Isa, who acted as spokesman of the group of 22 assemblymen who signed the memorandum, said Sanusi was also invited to their March 21 meeting but did not attend.

Sanusi, whom reporters met at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang after he had seen Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah off on their New Zealand visit, said he had no idea why talk that he would be appointed Kedah Menteri Besar resurfaced.

"I don't want to comment," he said when he was asked for his views on the memorandum.

Sanusi also said he did not discuss the matter with Dr Mahathir.

Umno vice president Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib hoped the issue could be resolved as soon as possible and not be allowed to hamper the Kedah administration or lead to a situation which could jeopardise the investment climate in the state.

Muhammad, who is Selangor Menteri Besar, was confident the issue could be resolved by the party leadership. -- BERNAMA

ARA LDB