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OSMAN SAYS PM DIRECTED HIM TO RESIGN

ALOR SETAR, May 7 (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Osman Aroff said today he tendered his resignation as Menteri Besar on the directive of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I only wish to say I sent in my resignation letter to the Prime Minister because he asked me to do so," Osman told reporters who waited to interview him outside the compound of his residence at Lorong Menteri 1 here.

However, he declined to state the date when he submitted the letter except that it was handed over several months ago.

Asked when Dr Mahathir asked him to submit his resignation letter, Osman said: "Also a long time ago."

He said he had discussed the matter with Dr Mahathir and, if necessary, he would meet the Prime Minister again.

Asked on the date his resignation would take effect, Osman said it could not be determined as yet.

"I don't know what the Prime Minister intends to do next ... he had just made the announcement yesterday, so I am only confirming what he said.

"As to what will happen, I don't know."

Questioned whether he had expected Dr Mahathir would announce his resignation yesterday, Osman said he did not.

"It came as a surprise to me ... there were no indications he would announce," he added.

Dr Mahathir made the disclosure when he was asked by reporters at Parliament House after he had tabled the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

Osman said if necessary, he would have a meeting with Kedah Umno members to explain his action.

Asked about his future plans, he said: "I am still the Menteri Besar, so I have to carry out the duties of the Menteri Besar."

On his position as the assemblyman for Jitra, Osman said he had not thought about the matter.

"About that, I don't know. I only did my resignation letter as requested by the Prime Minister.

"I don't know what will be his decision. So, wait for the decision ... I cannot jump the gun," he said.

Osman was also asked whether he would contest for a seat in the Umno Supreme Council.

He said he had already submitted his registration form to offer himself as a candidate in the council election.

Osman had publicly stated after the 1995 general election when speculations began about his position as Menteri Besar that he would step down if requested to do so by the Prime Minister.

He also said he would comply with any decision of the leadership.

Osman was appointed the fourth Kedah Menteri Besar on Jan 28, 1985.

He is the longest-serving assemblyman in the state, having represented the Jitra constituency since 1969. -- BERNAMA

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