

20 JAN 1996
Mahathir-Rahim
PM LEAVES IT TO RAHIM TO DECIDE

BANTING, Jan 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has left it to Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik to decide whether or not to accept the post of Umno Youth leader as offered by the Umno supreme council on Tuesday.

The prime minister said today that Rahim met him yesterday to seek his advice on the matter but he only expressed his stand as well as that of the supreme council.

"If he chooses it (to return as Umno Youth leader) we accept. Everyone must also accept but ultimately the choice is his although he asked me," he told reporters after attending a "Leader in the Village" function in Kampung Endah, Kuala Langat, Selangor.

Yesterday Rahim met Dr Mahathir in Sri Perdana in connection with the supreme council decision that the former Melaka chief minister had the right to resume his post as Umno Youth chief.

Dr Mahathir said that during the short meeting Rahim did not make any decision because he wanted to get the views of several other parties.

This was in keeping with party courtesy, he said, adding that according to Umno discipline, a member could not ignore the views of other members even if he was entitled to a certain thing.

Asked for his impression of the meeting, the prime minister said: "I don't know. So far he did not say he did not want. Maybe he wants to be. It is up to him."

Asked whether he would be unhappy if Rahim rejected the supreme council's decision, he said: "Whether I'm happy or not has no relevance whatsoever in this matter.

Dr Mahathir also said that that to his knowledge, the decision for Rahim to step down temporarily until he had resolved his problems was only noted in the minutes of the supreme council meeting on Sept 8, 1994.

On the offers by several leaders to contest in the party elections in October, Dr Mahathir said it was too early to do so.

However, he said, the leaders had promised not to spend too much time campaigning.

He hoped that the press would also cooperate by not helping to campaign for anyone.

So far, six leaders including the incumbents, had announced their intention to vie for the three vice-president's posts.

The incumbents are Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib while their prospective challengers are Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Defence minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar and Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib. -- more

Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, Bagan Datoh MP Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad had expressed their interest to vie for the Umno Youth chief's post.

Among those who had announced their intention to contest for a seat on the supreme council are Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman and Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the Sabah Umno Youth's

resolution yesterday rejecting the rotation of the Sabah chief minister's post among the three biggest communities in the state.

He said the official stand of Umno and the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the matter was that they would keep the promise made during the campaigning in the Sabah election in March 1994 unless the state BN unanimously rejected it.

He said Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee had reported to him the result of the meeting of Sabah BN component leaders on the matter recently.

Dr Mahathir declined to reveal the report but said he was prepared to hear the views of other parties.

Meanwhile, in KUALA LUMPUR, Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said the question of rotation of the Sabah chief minister's post should be left to the Umno supreme council and Dr Mahathir to decide.

"What is important is for Sabah Umno to consolidate its position so that we can be in power at any time. They must remember that Sabah Umno did not win outright in the Sabah election. Although Sabah Umno won 18 seats it could not form the government," he said.

He said that if Sabah Umno wanted to remain in power it should strengthen its position so that the confidence of the people of Sabah in Umno would increase and umno could achieve outright victory in future.

"Let's not question the rotation issue because it has been decided by the supreme council," he said. -- Bernama