

29 MAR 1996

Mahathir-meeting

PM TO MEET KEDAH LEADERS OVER MB ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will meet all Kedah Umno state assemblymen, members of parliament and divisional leaders tomorrow to get their views on the Kedah Menteri Besar issue.

He said he was relieved because it appeared that the issue, which began when 22 Kedah state assemblymen made public a memorandum to Dr Mahathir on the Menteri Besar's post, could be overcome.

"I am relieved to hear that that they (the 22 assemblymen) will apologise," he told reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah airport in Subang on arrival from a five-day official visit to New Zealand.

He said while he was away in New Zealand, he had delegated the responsibility of dealing with the issue to his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

And from what he heard from Anwar, there had been some positive development on the issue, he added.

Anwar was at the airport to receive Dr Mahathir.

The 22 Umno state assemblymen, who in their memorandum pledged support for Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and opposed any move to replace him with Kuah assemblyman Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, yesterday said they would apologise to Dr Mahathir over their action.

Asked if there would be a change of Menteri Besar, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know anything about the change. I want to (speak to) certain people to get information on this matter."

The Prime Minister, who is also Umno president, said it was true that he sometimes wrote to Osman but they were related to official duties.

He said laughingly that he did not know if he had so far written any letter on the subject of replacing Osman as Menteri Besar.

"That's why I need to meet all the people involved including Umno divisional leaders in Kedah who had made statements, after receiving a report from Datuk Seri Anwar," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that while he was in New Zealand, he did not know that the 22 assemblymen wanted to apologise.

Umno was strong because its members abided by rules, he said, adding that the rules were not written but were part of Umno culture.

He said it was seldom that there were incidents in Umno where the rules were not observed.

Umno leaders and members knew about the rules and practices of the party, he added.

The Prime Minister said he always considered everyone's views and "will not be around for long if I don't listen to others".

Also at the airport to receive Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah were Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim who brought along 21 assemblymen and MPs from the state to show their support for the Prime Minister.

On his visit to New Zealand, Dr Mahathir said it was a success based on the programmes arranged and discussions on bilateral ties and international problems.

He also took the opportunity to explain to New Zealand leaders about the East Asian Economic Caucus and from his discussions with them they did not appear to oppose the EAEC, Dr Mahathir said.

The visit was on the whole very fruitful, with several memoranda of

understanding signed between Malaysian and New Zealand companies, he added.

-- BERNAMA.

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