

04 MAY 1996

Yong-Amendments

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO STATE LAWS SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC, SAYS YONG

KOTA KINABALU, May 4 (Bernama) -- Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee said today that he will make public the proposed amendments to the five state laws aimed at curtailing the powers of the Chief Minister.

Yong, who is poised to take over the Chief Minister's post from Datuk Salleh Said Keruak, said the proposed amendments should have been made public so that the people could understand the rationale behind the move and what the proposed amendments entailed.

"If I were given a free hand and when I have the opportunity, I will as soon as possible release (the bill) and make it public. As for today, I am not in the position to do so," he told reporters after launching a Multi-Purpose Bank branch here.

Yong, who is also Finance Minister and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president, said he was confident that the public would support the proposed amendments when they have read the bill.

"This matter has been discussed many times at the cabinet level as well as among leaders of the various Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties and I think the time given (until June 17-18) for them to study the matter is ample for anybody to understand the bill," he said.

"It should have been made public earlier so that the anxiety and worry would have been put to rest. Government leaders must explain the advantages of the proposed amendments. (As for now) it has not yet been explained," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said that Yong would take over the post of Sabah Chief Minister from Salleh, who has submitted his resignation letter to him (Dr Mahathir) sometime ago.

Responding to a question from reporters at the end of his two-day visit to Melaka, Dr Mahathir had said that Yong should be the one to take over the post under the state's system of rotating the post every two years among the three major communities in Sabah -- the Muslim Bumiputeras, non-Muslim Bumiputeras and Chinese.

He also said that the two-day state assembly sitting scheduled for June 17-18 to debate the bill could be held earlier if the Sabah BN state assemblymen could be convinced.

On the date for him to be sworn in as the new Chief Minister, Yong said he had yet to be officially informed by the Yang Dipertua Negeri's office.

"We have to wait for the official communication from the Istana. But we understand that it will be quite soon," he said.

Asked on reservations of certain Umno leaders over his appointment and the resignation of Salleh, Yong said it had been discussed with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at a meeting yesterday.

"I think we can face whatever challenges ahead. What is important is that there should be understanding among all the Sabah BN component parties. We already have the indication that there will be consensus on whatever decisions made by the BN leadership," he said.

On whether there would be a cabinet reshuffle following his appointment to the post, Yong said it was still premature for him to make any statement regarding the matter.

He also said that he had made contacts with the Prime Minister's office to secure an appointment for a meeting with him. -- BERNAMA

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