

16 JAN 1996

Mahathir - Rahim

RAHIM'S RIGHT TO RETURN AS UMNO YOUTH CHIEF- COUNCIL

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 16 (Bernama) -- The Umno Supreme Council tonight unanimously decided that Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik has the right to return to his post as head of the Umno Youth Movement.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the council made the unanimous decision after referring to the minutes of its meeting on Sept 8, 1994 on the question of Rahim.

"According to the minutes we agreed that the Umno Youth Chief should withdraw and go on leave until investigations into his case were completed. As he was found not guilty, he has the right to be accepted back as Umno Youth head. Hence the decision of the council is he has the right," the Prime Minister and Umno President said after chairing the council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

On Jan 8, the Umno Youth Executive Committee decided to leave it to the Supreme Council to decide on the position of Rahim as head of the Umno Youth Movement.

The issue of whether it was appropriate for Rahim to return as Umno Youth head arose after its Acting head Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz offered to step aside so that Rahim could return to lead the movement as he had been cleared through the legal process of the various allegations made against him.

Among the allegations were that he had relations with an underage girl, that he was corrupt and that he had failed to declare his assets.

Investigations into allegations that he had relations with an underage girl were found to be baseless and the allegations of corruption were also withdrawn by the Attorney-General last November.

The hearing into the case of not declaring assets would begin at the Kuala Lumpur Sessions Court tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said the Supreme Council had to refer to its minutes to see the actual situation leading to the withdrawal of Rahim from his post at that time.

He said that at the meeting on Sept 8, 1994, Nazri had informed the Supreme Council that the entire Umno Youth Exco had agreed that the Umno Youth head withdraw for the time being to safeguard the image of the movement, the party and the government.

"That's the decision conveyed to the Supreme Council at that time and the Supreme Council has now made its decision as I have just stated that Rahim has the right to return to his post."

"He just have to say whether he is willing or not. It is up to him as to when he will take over the post again," the Prime Minister said after the meeting which lasted more than three hours.

Dr Mahathir said members of the Umno Youth Movement should adhere to the council's decision as it was they who had referred the matter to the council.

"They referred to us and we have decided. If they refer to us and we make a decision and if they refuse to accept it then it's meaningless to refer to us in the first place," he said and expressed confidence that the Umno Youth members would not oppose the supreme council's decision.

Dr Mahathir said the Umno Supreme Council made its decision after referring to the party Constitution which did not pose any obstacles for Rahim's return.

The Supreme Council's decision also respected the court's finding that

Rahim was not guilty of the charges levelled against him.

"We have to respect the court's ruling just as we have respected court orders on various other cases. Thus we cannot pass our own judgement," he said.

He said the question of the stain on Rahim arising from the allegations was too subjective as there were people who were known to have committed khalwat but the people had elected him with a big majority.

Meanwhile, Umno Vice-President Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib said Umno members should abide by the Supreme Council decision in any matter that it resolved.

"We have to abide by regulations and the Constitution," he said when commenting on the supreme council decision on Abdul Rahim.

He said the court decision was final and Rahim had the right to hold the post of Umno Youth head once more.

Melaka Umno Youth Chief Datuk Asari Ibrahim, when contacted at Lampung, Sumatra, Indonesia, said Melaka Umno Youth was bound by the Supreme Council decision. -- BERNAMA