

14 JUL 1996

SABAH GERAKAN CHAIRMAN KONG HONG MING SUSPENDED

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14 (Bernama) -- Sabah Gerakan Chairman Datuk Kong Hong Ming's party membership was today suspended for not supporting amendments to the State Forestry Enactment 1968 on June 17.

Kong has been issued with a show cause letter as to why he should not be expelled from the party. He has been given seven days to reply from today.

Gerakan Central Working Committee decided on this at its meeting chaired by party president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik at the Gerakan headquarters in Cheras here.

Kong, who is the assemblyman for Kudat and former Sabah Minister of Social Services, has been criticised by leaders of BN component parties for not supporting the amendments.

Prime Minister and BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said Kong should resign or change his stand.

Kong had said he was ready to resign as Sabah Gerakan Chairman over the issue.

Kong, who is also a national vice-president of Gerakan, abstained in the vote on the amendment. The Forestry Enactment was one of the five state laws amended to reduce the administrative powers of the Chief Minister.

Nominated assemblyman Jahid Jahim of Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat Bersatu was sacked by his party for voting against the Forestry Bill.

Speaking to reporters after the three-hour meeting, Dr Lim said the stern action against Kong was in line with Articles 17.1 and 17.2 of the party constitution.

Article 17.1 says that the CWC may suspend any member, branch, division and state liaison committee for conduct prejudicial to the interests of the party pending investigations, while Article 17.2 stipulates that a member disobeying the constitution or causing dissension and division in the party to show cause why he should not be expelled.

Dr Lim said since Kong had yet to openly declare his support for the amendments even after he (Kong) was briefed on it by Gerakan deputy president Datuk Kerk Choo Ting, the party had no choice but to suspend Kong.

Kerk had led a delegation to Sabah to explain to the state Gerakan pro-tem committee on the stand of the national party leadership with regard to the amendments to the Sabah laws.

Dr Lim had said last week that Kong should come out in the open and support the changes although he had accepted the decision of the national party leadership.

Asked if the suspension on Kong's membership would be lifted if he openly declared his support for the changes, Dr Lim said: "Let us wait what he has to say."

Replying to the barrage of attacks levelled against the Gerakan as a result of Kong's action, Dr Lim said Gerakan had "very definite procedures and the party is following the various procedures to give a fair hearing to anybody".

On Sabah Barisan Nasional's reminder to Gerakan to clarify its stand on Kong's decision not to support the amendment, Dr Lim said party secretary-general Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak had sent a letter dated July 6 to the Sabah BN secretary Datuk Haji Karim bin Haji Bujang stating Gerakan's stand supporting the amendments to the five state laws.

Dr Lim said about 1,300 delegates would attend the Gerakan delegates conference scheduled for Sept 14 and 15. The meeting is scheduled to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Gerakan's new headquarters in Jalan Pudu Ulu in Cheras.

The party elections would also be held simultaneously with the conference. The Gerakan Youth and Wanita wings will also hold their respective meetings on Sept 13. --BERNAMA

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