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Mahathir-Yong

YONG'S APPOINTMENT HAS CONNECTION WITH HIS COURT CASE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is looking into the possible implications of Datuk Yong Teck Lee's court case on his appointment as the new Sabah Chief Minister.

"I have to know whether there is a possibility of his being convicted and not being able to become chief minister," he told reporters at Parliament House here after tabling the Seventh Malaysia Plan in the Dewan Rakyat.

Dr Mahathir said: "If I appoint him and he is fined RM2,000 or more, it means that he loses his eligibility."

The prime minister announced last Friday the appointment of Yong, the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president, as chief minister in place of Datuk Salleh Said Keruak to fulfil his promise to rotate the post among the leaders of the three major communities in the state.

Dr Mahathir, when announcing the appointment, said the rotation would be implemented as soon as possible as Salleh had submitted his resignation letter.

Yong is charged with taking part in an illegal procession in Kota Kinabalu during the 1990 general election. The trial has started in the Magistrate's Court and will continue later this month. If convicted Yong faces a minimum fine of RM2,000.

Asked whether Yong would only be appointed after the court decision, Dr Mahathir said he wanted to know the possibilities first and he could not say whether it would be before or after.

He said he had to meet Yong to discuss the matter.

"I want to know what is the position. I only read about the case in the newspapers," he added.

Asked about the possibility of a Kadazn leader being chosen if Yong was convicted, Dr Mahathir said: "If (we) cannot get one Chinese, we will look for another Chinese or we look for a Kadazan... it depends."

He said what was important was that the government had agreed to rotate the post and this was being done.

The prime minister also said that so far no other name except Yong's had been submitted for the post. -- BERNAMA

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