

18/06/1997

About-turn by Hashim Ali (HL)

Randhir Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Jen (B) Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali, who yesterday made a surprise announcement to resign as Sukom Ninety Eight Bhd executive chairman, today withdrew the decision citing a "humble appeal" by acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Hashim, who was in tears yesterday, was today in a jovial and cheerful mood, promising the nation the "best ever (Commonwealth) Games this century whether the banners are there, billboards are there or not".

Hashim said Anwar told him to reconsider his decision as the Government and people could not afford to let him go.

"Short of directing me, Anwar requested I stayed on," said Hashim. "The reason I withdrew (the resignation) is because of the humble request from the acting Prime Minister," he told reporters after attending a sponsorship signing ceremony between Sukom and Taylor's School of Management.

Hashim in an emotional Press conference yesterday announced his resignation, following criticisms on the inadequate promotion and publicity of the Games to be held from Sept 11 to 21 next year.

He said he was hurt by the remarks of several Ministers, which he considered "unfair and personal" and "which had damaged his pride and the good name of Sukom".

He singled out Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik's statement on the high salaries of Sukom staff and first class travel by its executives.

Hashim's meeting with Anwar, at the Prime Minister's Department, lasted half an hour.

"Anwar expressed his concern and regret over what happened over the last few days. He told me he tried to contact me in Hong Kong (Hashim was presenting a paper on the Games at a seminar there) to say that there were a lot of things in the newspapers and not to react but to remain calm."

Hashim said Anwar also mentioned the implications of his resignation.

"And I myself discovered it after the announcement when I received phone calls and faxes, including from sponsors wanting to pull out. The news caused a lot of uncertainty."

Looking cheerful, Hashim said Anwar would announce new ground rules tomorrow on the preparation for the Games.

"As to what they are I leave it to the acting PM to reveal. I am at no liberty to disclose."

Asked if he discussed the "new ground rules" with Anwar, Hashim said "yes".

On why he did not think of the implications of his resignation earlier, Hashim said it did not cross his mind.

Hashim also denied that he had over-reacted to the criticisms.

As to how he would react to criticisms in future, Hashim said Sukom could accept these as long as they were not "personal insults".

Asked if Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was consulted or knew of the entire episode, Hashim said "no".

"The PM is on leave. I don't even know where he is. My line of communication is the acting Prime Minister. I deal with Datuk Seri Anwar. I report to him."

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