

16 DEC 1997

Mahathir-Ghapur

DR MAHATHIR UNSURE WHY GHAPUR RESIGNS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he will seek explanation from Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh for resigning as Sabah deputy chief minister and state finance minister effective Thursday.

Abdul Ghapur, who announced his decision last Saturday, also resigned as Sabah Umno deputy liaison chief with immediate effect.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said so far he had not received any feedback why Abdul Ghapur resigned.

"I can't say yet how I feel about his resignation as I have yet to know his reasons for doing so," he said when reporters asked him on the matter at the close of the Second Asean Informal Summit here.

Asked when he would see Abdul Ghapur, the prime minister said: "I'll see him when I'm free, now I'm not free yet."

Asked further whether Abdul Ghapur's resignation would undermine Sabah's rotating chief ministership: "I don't know. We'll have to see first, must see the reason."

When making the announcement in Tawau at the Umno divisional headquarters there, Abdul Ghapur, 54, cited personal reasons for resigning and that he was not able to carry out his cabinet responsibilities.

Abdul Ghapur, who is the state assemblyman for Merotai, still remains as Tawau Umno division chief.

Meanwhile in TAMPARULI, about 30km from Kota Kinabalu, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee told reporters that the state Cabinet, which meets tomorrow, is expected to discuss Abdul Ghapur's resignation.

Yong said although the meeting would not specifically deliberate on the matter, the cabinet would obviously have to discuss the resignation of one of its members.

Asked whether he had made a decision with regard to Abdul Ghapur's resignation or his replacement, Yong said it was still premature for that.

"Let the dust settles down first. Only then we'll get a clearer picture," he said after attending a meet-the-people function there today.

Yong declined to elaborate on whether he had communicated with Dr Mahathir or his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on the Abdul Ghapur's issue merely saying he was in constant contact with the two leaders. -- BERNAMA

JS rn