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Muhammad-Reaction

SELANGOR ASSEMBLYMEN SHOCKED BY MUHAMMAD'S RESIGNATION

KLANG, April 12 (Bernama) -- Several Selangor state assemblymen including DAP opposition members were shocked by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's announcement on the resignation of Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib as Selangor Menteri Besar today.

Most of the Brisan Nasional (BN) assemblymen said the decision was a surprise to them because there had been no indication that Muhammad would resign although it was common knowledge that he was facing a court action in Australia.

Paya Jaras Assemblyman Datuk Saidin Tamby said on the phone today, he was most surprised to hear the announcement from the radio at noon today.

"With his resignation, Selangor has lost a high-calibre dynamic leader," he said while adding that he and Muhammad stepped into the assembly for the first time together in 1982.

Saidin was a Selangor Executive Councillor for a term and later became the speaker also for a term under Muhammad's leadership. Muhammad, the Batang Kali Assemblyman, became the Menteri Besar in August 1986.

When asked on the forthcoming two-day meeting of the assembly beginning Monday, Saidin said the assembly could meet as usual.

"The executive councillors can move motions on bills if necessary...the Water Supply Bill scheduled for the first day will be tabled at that meeting," he said.

Former DAP assemblyman Dr Tan Seng Giaw said, he became the state assemblyman at the same time as Muhammad in 1982 and became the opposition leader in the state assembly under his leadership until 1995.

"This is an unfortunate matter, (Muhammad's resignation) and I never expect it to happen.

"But we cannot be the judge on his case, we can't say he is guilty except the court (will decide)," he said.

He said the most important thing was that as fellow humans we should not add more problems to the difficulties faced by another human being.

When asked why he sounded sentimental in his comments, Dr Tan said, "We are old timers, I have never criticised him over personal matters,"

Damansara Utama Assemblyman Dr Oon Hong Geok, also from the DAP, said Muhammad's resignation was apt and correct because as a state government leader and a legislator, he was more enlightened on the law and should not go against the law of another country.

"By resigning, he admits committing a mistake and that admission gives him integrity," he said.

Dr Oon said the DAP planned to move a motion on a vote of no confidence against the Menteri Besar in the State Assembly on Monday and demanded that he resigned from his Menteri Besar post.

Dr Oon said the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) should continue with the probe on Muhammad and should also probe the other Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers to give the people the true picture on their wealth.

"We do not deny that Muhammad had contributed tremendously to the development of Selangor to become the most developed state," he said while adding that the court case in Australia was also a reality.

He said the second charge against Muhammad in Brisbane for falsifying a statement was more serious in relation to the case of failure to declare RM2.4 million worth of foreign currencies which he carried with him on his departure for New Zealand from Australia in December.

Bandar Klang Assembly Chua Kow Eng was also surprised to hear Muhammad's resignation but said it was a correct move and hoped his successor could be appointed as soon as possible.

Meru Assemblyman Jaei Ismail said the announcement came as a shock to him as if members of Umno had just lost a father and the people lost an excellent and honest leader who had contributed immensely to developments in the state.

Bukit Lanjan Assemblyman Dr Pius Martin who was also shocked by the news felt very sad because Muhammad was a strong and hardworking leader who brought progress and prosperity to the state.

"Under the circumstances before him, he has made a right decision by resigning," he said.

He believed Muhammad had considered the matter deeply before arriving at the decision.

DAP Secretary-General Lim Kit Siang said Muhammad should confirm or deny the allegations about his wealth.

He said as Muhammad retained his position as UMNO Vice-President and being still in the political mainstream, he must uphold the principles of accountability, transparency and integrity and he could not remain silent on all the four allegations brought against him.

The four allegations, reported by foreign media were the RM2.4 million cash for which he was arrested in Brisbane was intended to purchase furniture and fittings for his new house at Gold Coast Islands, his RM2.4 million Gold Coast home was being built at Sovereign Islands.

The other two allegations are his RM5 million ranch in Queensland and his RM16 million divorce settlement with Tengku Puteri Zahariah Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah.

Lim said he had called on Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning to direct Muhammad to publicly explain the RM25.4 million worth of various expenditures and properties which had been reported by international media.

He said Muhammad should also explain his other unreported expenditures and properties until he resigned as menteri besar today and to declare his total assets, including that of his wife and nex of kin.

Lim added Muhammad's resignation was something that should have been done right from the beginning and it is now up to the Anti Corruption Agency to prove its effectiveness in investigating into Muhammad's various properties and expenditures.

In KOTA BAHARU, The Kelantan Umno expressed regret over Muhammad's resignation when the charges against him were yet to be proven.

Its deputy liaison chairman Datuk Annuar Musa said as a colleague, he had to respect Muhammad's decision.

"I believe that he (Muhammad) had carefully studied the matter, and the interest of the party and the nation, before making the decision to quit," he said commenting on the resignation, announced by Dr. Mahathir.

Annuar urged all concerned to remain patient and refrain from any hasty moves to judge Muhammad, as though he had already been found guilty.

"On the contrary, we must appreciate his wisdom in making such an important decision (to resign) in the interests of the party and nation," he said. -- BERNAMA

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