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Sultan: PM didn't name candidate (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Sultan of Selangor said the question of him not consenting to names submitted by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the State's next Menteri Besar did not arise because the Prime Minister had yet to name a candidate.

The Ruler's confidential secretary, Mohd Munir Bani, said the Sultan expressed regret over reports in certain newspapers that he did not consent to Dr Mahathir's list of candidates.

In a statement released to the Press today, Munir said: "This is because the Prime Minister has yet to submit the name of the candidate ... hence, the question of the Sultan not consenting did not arise at all."

Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian, under the heading Sultan tidak berkenan (Sultan did not consent), reported in their front pages that the appointment of the Menteri Besar could not be made because the Sultan had yet to agree to the candidate.

The Sun, also in its front page and under the heading MB Deadlock, reported that the Ruler "disagreed with a slate of candidates for the Menteri Besar's post presented to him by the Prime Minister."

The statement, issued from Istana Alam Shah about 3pm today, also referred to news reports in the Utusan Malaysia under the heading "Pemimpin Umno, DAP kesal tindakan Sultan (Umno, DAP leaders regret the Sultan's action). The Sultan expressed regret over the report, describing it as baseless.

Munir said the report could create tension between the people and the Rulers.

Munir said leaders should have investigated the real situation before making any statement.

"Do not make a statement that can aggravate the situation. A leader should exercise care when dealing with an issue as sensitive as this," he said.

Clarifying as to what happened at yesterday's meeting between the Sultan and Dr Mahathir at Istana Selangor here, Munir said: "The Prime Minister will study the background of possible candidates and once he gets the most suitable one, he will present them to the Sultan for his consent."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the issue today. The Prime Minister, who made a day trip to Penang, was met at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Butterworth before leaving for the Federal capital.

Reflecting on Munir's statement, Dr Mahathir reiterated there was no list submitted to the Sultan at yesterday's meeting.

He was asked whether the Sultan was interfering with the appointment of a new Menteri Besar for Selangor.

Dr Mahathir said the question of the Sultan interfering in the exercise did not arise. He was also asked if there was any problem in the selection and whether the Sultan had his own choice of candidate for Menteri Besar.

The Prime Minister said: "No, he is not interfering. He is waiting for me to name the Menteri Besar. He said we can wait for two weeks or more ... so, we'll see."

Asked to comment on reports in several newspapers today suggesting that there was a deadlock in the selection, the Prime Minister said: "I don't know what he said to the Press. I don't know that he tak berkenan (did not consent)."

"But there's no problem. I don't know if he has his own choice for MB.

He didn't tell me."

Asked if he had presented a list of possible candidates to the Sultan, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't have a list. How can I give him a list? I think you all heard wrongly."

The Sultan, however, said he wanted a candidate who was clean and sincere.

Against this background, Dr Mahathir was asked if he could recall the criteria with which he had chosen Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib as Menteri Besar.

Dr Mahathir replied: "Well, as far as I knew, he (Muhammad) was clean at that time. People are not always clean but I am not accusing him of being unclean. But he is involved in a scandal and we don't want this to tarnish the good name of Umno."

Asked what criteria he would use to select the new Menteri Besar, Dr Mahathir said: "That is up to me-lah. I don't have to tell the Press. You people want to know everything."

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