

31/05/1998

Emotive welcome by 200 supporters at airport

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib returned from Brisbane tonight to an emotive welcome from his supporters who garlanded and hugged him.

Some of his supporters - about 200 turned up - chanted "Hidup Mat Taib" as he made his way through the crowd at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport. Muhammad said he was heading for his kampung to meet his parents and to hold a feast.

Muhammad said he would return to active politics if there was support.

"Otherwise, I will balik kampung where there are so many things for me to do," Muhammad told reporters.

He parried a series of questions from reporters on the sources of his wealth, saying he had told everything to the relevant agencies and the Anti-Corruption Agency during the past 18 months.

Muhammad, who is on leave as an Umno vice-president, said he hoped to meet Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon.

Earlier in Brisbane, Ruslaini Abbas reports Muhammad said he and his brothers were taking home the money that landed him in court. This was in line with the Government's call to help Malaysia's economy.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists, Muhammad said he had sold his Sovereign Island property "at a loss" last year and would sell the 4,400ha farm in Currajong Park in Queensland.

Muhammad said he and his family were also planning to sell their three properties in New Zealand.

Muhammad, 52, who resigned as the Menteri Besar in April last year, had S\$1.1 million, RM690,000, US\$77,300, NZ\$25,030 and about A\$1,000 when he left Australia for New Zealand on Dec 22, 1996.

The money was seized by the federal police following his arrest at the Brisbane International Airport on Dec 22, 1996 and released yesterday.

Asked if he would contest the vice-presidency in next year's election, he said he had not given it thought as it was "still a long way to go".

"The ACA checked our accounts and scrutinised the records and it is up to them whether to take any action against me," he said, adding that whatever he told the ACA was consistent with the evidence in court.

He said he had declared his assets to the Prime Minister after becoming Menteri Besar in 1986 and made further declarations after each general election.

(END)