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Ghafar-Anwar

GHAJAR DEFENDS MAHATHIR'S SACKING OF ANWAR

JAKARTA, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba today defended Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's action in dismissing Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister has the right and authority under the Constitution to sack his Deputy Prime Minister or his Cabinet members if he found them to be unfit to hold the positions, he told a news conference at the Shangrila Hotel, here.

Ghafar, visiting here in his private capacity, had called for the news conference to rebut misleading reports on the Anwar issue.

He said that Dr Mahathir found Anwar's moral misconduct beyond tolerance and it has made him to be unfit to be the next Prime Minister or national leader of Malaysia.

"I think Indonesia and other countries would not want this kind of leader to govern the country," he said.

Ghafar said that Dr Mahathir was very careful and had thoroughly studied police reports about Anwar's sexual improprieties since it was first brought to his attention in 1993.

The Prime Minister initially could not be convinced because he was aware of Anwar's background. Anwar was an Islamic student leader before joining politics.

"Dr Mahathir has over the years prepared and groomed Anwar to succeed him as Prime Minister at the time when he goes on retirement, perhaps in the next two or three years.... I don't know when as this is not my business," he said.

He said Anwar was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) because the former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister was involved in provoking and instigating people to go against the government which was elected by the people.

Anwar would be brought to court if his followers stop staging rallies or other activities that could incite the public, leading to disturbances, Ghafar said.

He regretted that some Indonesians including lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution had pledged to defend Anwar in court and to gather funds in support of Anwar.

"I think it would be much better for Buyung to concentrate on helping Indonesia to overcome the nation's problems and difficulties because Anwar is rich enough to support his family and he has claimed to have some 70 international standard lawyers to defend him in court," he said.

Ghafar also expressed regret over the statement by Dr Amien Rais who stated that Dr Mahathir was similar to former President Suharto as both are dictators.

He said that a Malaysian Prime Minister had to campaign and face a tough contest before winning an election.

"But there is a country, I won't name it, where a leader just sits idle and can win an election without a contest," he said.

Ghafar said he has no plans to meet President Habibie during his visit.

"I may meet several old friends during my few days' stay in Indonesia where I have a house in Bogor," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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