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Sabbaruddin-Muhammad

NO OBSTACLE TO MUHAMMAD TO RETURN AS UMNO VICE-PRESIDENT, SAYS SABBARUDDIN

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31 (Bernama) -- There is nothing to obstruct former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhamad Taib from resuming his post as Umno vice-president, party secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said today.

"Who says there's obstruction," he said when asked by reporters whether there was any technicality that could stop Muhammad from returning to his party post.

"His reason for taking leave of absence from the post was so as not to hamper the investigation against him...if that is the reason, there is no problem...it is up to the supreme council and him," he said.

Sabbaruddin was asked to comment on Muhammad's status in Umno following his acquittal by a district court in Brisbane, on two counts of falsely declaring the money he was bringing into Australia on Dec 16, 1996, and failing to declare more than A\$1.26 million (RM2.9 million) when leaving for New Zealand six days later.

He said what was important was that Muhammad had taken leave and had not resigned from his vice-president's post.

He said that previously former Melaka chief minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik had also taken leave from his post as Umno Youth leader.

Asked whether, just like Rahim who was reinstated as Umno Youth leader after he was acquitted by the court, Muhammad had a right to return to his vice-president's post, Sabbaruddin said: "It's not a question of right...the question is he was on leave."

Hence, it was up to the Umno supreme council, which had approved Muhammad's leave, he said, adding that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had announced yesterday that the supreme council would discuss the matter at its meeting on June 8.

Sabbaruddin also said that it would be good if Muhammad or anyone else owning property abroad sold their assets and brought back the money to boost Malaysia's ringgit position.

Earlier, Sabbaruddin, who is Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister, launched the MCA's "Menyemarakkan Semangat Cintai Malaysia" campaign to promote love for Malaysia through local songs at Merdeka Square, here.

-- BERNAMA

MNY JK