

03/09/1998

Umno members, public urged to support decision

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - A Cabinet Minister, several Menteri Besar and a Chief Minister today called on Umno members and the people to support the Prime Minister in his "difficult" decision to remove Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Cabinet.

Education Minister and Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak urged the people to remain calm and to put party interests above all other matters.

"I believe Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has studied in detail all the facts, before making the decision.

"Let's give the Prime Minister our full trust and remain solidly behind him," he said.

Meanwhile in Durban (South Africa), Foreign Minister and Umno vice-president Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi supported Dr Mahathir's decision, saying that it was the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

Abdullah said he believed Umno members would understand the situation and called on the public and party members to accept and support the move.

In Ipoh, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said the Prime Minister's decision to remove Anwar was a difficult one but had to be made in the interests of the people and the country.

He said Dr Mahathir certainly made the decision after careful consideration.

Ramli, who is also State Umno liaison chief, said the decision was made for the well-being of the people and the country.

"Dr Mahathir is not noted for making a hasty decision. He wants to ensure the administration under him runs smoothly," he added.

Ramli said Dr Mahathir would have given Anwar other options but when this was not forthcoming, he had to make a drastic decision.

He expressed the hope that the people would accept the decision with an open mind and not create tension or trouble.

In Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the Prime Minister had the discretion to exercise his rights and make decisions.

"We must give our support to the Prime Minister to discharge the duties entrusted to him," he said.

In Seremban, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad said he was confident Dr Mahathir had valid reasons before coming to such a decision.

He said Anwar's post as Deputy Prime Minister was at the discretion of the Prime Minister and the people must be confident that any move to remove him (Anwar) was done in good faith.

Mohamad Isa also expressed confidence that the unity in Umno would not be disrupted by the decision and that the members would at all times maintain their faith and confidence in the Prime Minister.

"Furthermore, Umno is experienced in matters such as the sacking and resignation of deputy prime ministers and would not be taken by surprise."

In Shah Alam, Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said Dr Mahathir as the Prime Minister had the right to appoint and dismiss members of the Cabinet.

"In this case, I am sure the Prime Minister has concrete reasons for doing so.

"Selangor concurs with the decision of the Prime Minister especially since it has received the consent of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong."

He said the people should remain calm and not allow this to distract

them from the efforts to overcome the economic problems.

In Kuala Terengganu, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said the State would stand strongly behind the Prime Minister.

He said the Prime Minister had his right to select who should be his deputy.

"We have given our trust to Dr Mahathir in selecting who should lead the nation including to overcome the country's economic problems as well as any other crisis. Therefore, all of us should stay united.

"In addition, I believe that the PM's action will further stabilise the country's politics for Dr Mahathir knows what he is doing."

Wan Mokhtar, who is also Terengganu Umno liaison chief, also urged all Umno members to remain calm and not to make any hasty generalisation.

Also in Kuala Terengganu, Malacca Chief Minister and State Umno Liaison chief Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin, supported Dr Mahathir's decision.

He said Malacca Umno had made the decision to support the president much earlier and would abide by what had been agreed upon.

Abu Zahar is here for a visit.

In Penang, State Umno liaison deputy chairman Datuk Mohamed Shariff Omar called on party members in the State to be calm and united and to continue giving Dr Mahathir their support.

Mohamed Shariff, who is Pulau Pinang Deputy Chief Minister, said the State Umno liaison body still held to its open declaration on Aug 11 to support Dr Mahathir's leadership.

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