

19 JUN 1999

Lim-Conspiracy

ANWAR INSTIGATED CHONG TO TOPPLE ME, SAYS KENG YAIK

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik today revealed that former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had instigated Datuk Joseph Chong to topple him in the 1996 party election.

Dr Lim said that Anwar's involvement was stated by Chong, who is now the Independent Member of Parliament for Batu, in a letter to him earlier this year.

"I am quoting Datuk Joseph Chong as saying in his letter that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim instigated him to challenge me in the October 1996 party election," he told reporters after chairing the Gerakan Central Committee meeting at Wisma PGRM, near here.

Reading the letter, Dr Lim said Chong, in the letter in January, said he met Anwar at the Shangri-La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel in Kota Kinabalu during the National Day celebration, at 11.30am.

"...I was contacted at 9.30am by Anwar's private secretary to meet Anwar at 11.30 that morning at Shangri La Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel and when I met him, Datuk Seri Anwar wanted to know of my political plan in the Gerakan assembly and I told him that I might contest the post of secretary general of the party.

"And then, he (Anwar) instigated me to contest the party presidency and explaining in detail why should I go for it...Datuk Seri Anwar was giving the impression it was the prime minister's blessings for me (Joseph) to contest," he said.

Dr Lim said that it was a right time for him to expose the issue and at first he could not believe it because "there was an understanding of the Barisan Nasional (BN) that leaders had agreed not to disturb each other."

"It's a conspiracy not only to topple the leadership of Umno but also to topple Gerakan, a component party of the BN," he said.

Asked by reporters why Chong had written the letter now, Dr Lim replied that "I myself do not know why".

Chong planned to challenge Dr Lim as party president but was disqualified from contesting. Dr Lim retained his post after beating challenger Cheang Chin Chai with a majority of 857 votes in the election.

Chong tendered his letter indicating his desire to leave the party on Nov 22, 1996 and was accepted by the party's central committee two weeks later.

Commenting on the speech by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday at the Umno general assembly, Dr Lim said that Gerakan supported Dr Mahathir's leadership to lead the country in the next century.

"Gerakan will be the first party to appeal to Dr Mahathir to stay on and lead the BN until the next election," he said.

On the meeting today, Dr Lim said the Central Committee decided that it would hold another meeting on July 18 to discuss further preparations for the party's general assembly, scheduled for July 24-25.

-- BERNAMA

APG RM