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Sabah-Ghapur
GHAPUR SAYS HE LOVES UMNO, WANTS TO STAY ON

By: Azman Zakaria

TAWAU, Feb 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh, who shocked Sabahans with his abrupt decision to step down as deputy chief minister in 1997, says he is still very much in active politics and remains committed to Umno.

"I want to continue serving the people of Sabah," said the 55-year-old assemblyman for Merotai in the just-dissolved state assembly.

Ghapur caused a stir when he announced on Dec 13, 1997 that he was giving up his deputy chief ministership, citing personal reasons. He also quit as state finance minister and as Sabah Umno Liaison Committee deputy chief.

He, however, held on to the posts on the advice of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Ghapur was excluded from the state cabinet on his request when Tan Sri Bernard Dompok took over as chief minister on May 28 last year.

Met at his house here, Ghapur said he would be happy to continue serving the people in Merotai and nearby Kalabakan, a new seat created under the redelineation of electoral boundaries.

"The people of Merotai and Kalabakan were initially disappointed with my decision to resign but they accepted it after hearing my explanation.

"In fact, they are giving me undivided support in this election. If I'm nominated and win in the polls, and the BN forms the government, they want me to accept whatever posts offered to me," he said.

The Sabah Legislative Assembly was dissolved today and a fresh state election is expected next month.

Asked what his reaction would be if he was re-elected as a Barisan Nasional assemblyman but not given any post, Ghapur said he would carry on serving the people.

"What's important is unity...if everyone fights for posts there won't be enough posts to give out. This can cause disunity and Umno will be destroyed.

"As long as we remain in Umno, we could contribute," he said.

Ghapur entered politics in the 1970s through Berjaya, which which then ruling the state. He won the Merotai seat in 1981 but failed to retain it in the 1985 election.

He then went into business, but returned to politics in 1991 by joining Umno. After winning in the 1994 state election, he was made the deputy chief minister.

To a question, Ghapur said he did not regret his decision to give up his posts.

"Positions are not important, whether high or low. What's important is to go on carrying our duties sincerely," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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