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Mohamed

I WANT TO GIVE OTHERS A CHANCE, SAYS MOHAMED

By: Azman Ujang

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31 (Bernama) -- There have been various versions on Datuk Mohamed Rahmat being dropped in a minor Cabinet reshuffle on May 20 but the man himself today said he gave it up to allow other Umno leaders a chance to enjoy the privilege of being a Cabinet minister.

Mohamed, the former Information Minister, said he did not resign but "let go" of the post he held for the second time since 1987. He was first appointed a Cabinet minister in 1978 but was dropped in 1982 and made Ambassador to Indonesia until 1985 before he was again made a Cabinet minister.

"This time, I let go of the post because I believe being made a Cabinet minister is not a right. Only the Prime Minister has that right. And, I know it is not the Prime Minister's style to get rid of someone (minister)," he said in an interview with Bernama at the Barisan Nasional headquarters here.

"It is his prerogative to appoint any suitable and capable party member as a Cabinet minister. He has the right to appoint and the right to end it and which nobody should question. To me, being made a Cabinet member is a privilege and not a right and then again, that privilege is up to us to accept or to decline," he said.

Since it is a privilege, he said one appointed to such a post should not assume that it is for good as the time would come when the privilege would end.

"I also know it is not easy on the part of the Prime Minister to end the services of someone, it has never been his style. Thus, it is up to those who have been given the privilege whether they want to continue to hold onto the appointment or not to make life difficult for the leader," he said.

Elaborating, Mohamed, 61, gave as an example a big political party, such as Umno, with many leaders with the potential to be made ministers.

He said these leaders with potential would not get a chance if those already serving as ministers stayed on.

"One reason I gave up my post is to see rejuvenation in this government continue so that those who are younger and more energetic too could enjoy the same privilege," he said.

Mohamed said in this context, the younger generation has high hopes which if disregarded, could lead to problems for the governing party and the government.

Mohamed said he used the term "rejuvenation" as in 1965, he was one of the younger generation given the chance to sit in the government with his first appointment as a Political Secretary.

He described himself as the "sole survivor" from the administration of Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman where he first started as Parliamentary Secretary of the Health Ministry and then continuing to serve under all four Prime Ministers.

"I once informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that I was appointed a Deputy Minister in 1972, earlier than when he was appointed a Cabinet minister in 1974," he quipped.

On it being not a "fashion" in Malaysia for Cabinet ministers to resign compared to the tendency in certain countries, Mohamed said: "I say we should not make it difficult for the leader. Yes, it is not easy for the leader when he has to end the services of someone. It's not his style...but

also we should not take advantage of that".

He also said in a coalition government such as the Barisan Nasional, the Prime Minister did not have much flexibility in the appointment of Cabinet ministers.

"As the system of each component party is represented in the Cabinet, sometimes it is difficult for the Prime Minister to reshuffle the Cabinet as long as that someone remains as president of his party...but, in Umno, it is not a problem as the party is big and the leaders can be changed at anytime," he said.

Mohamed said Cabinet ministers should not think that the privilege given to them are permanent and theirs to keep.

"There are many others who could be given such privilege but they will not get it if noone made way for them," he said in response to a question concerning complaints, especially by opposition parties, that some Cabinet ministers did not carry out their duties well.

Mohamed hoped his views on this would not be misconstrued.

-- BERNAMA

AU THG