

04 AUG 1999
Mahathir-Zaharah
RESHUFFLE IN WANITA UMNO REVERSE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman has agreed to reverse the reshuffle made to the movement's executive committee on the advice of the party president.

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here today that the status quo in Wanita Umno would thus be maintained.

Siti Zaharah did not attend the one-and-a-half-hour long meeting as she was unwell, said Dr Mahathir.

Siti Zaharah, had on Monday, announced the reshuffle which included the appointment of two new Wanita Umno state chiefs for Pulau Pinang and Wilayah Persekutuan aimed at strengthening the movement for the coming general election.

In the reshuffle, Senator Che Jam Harun was appointed Pulau Pinang Wanita Umno chief in place of Sharifah Aminah Syed Mohamed while Mariany Mohamed Yit replaced Azizah Abdul Samad as Wilayah Persekutuan Wanita Umno chief.

Siti Zaharah had also announced the appointment of Rokiah Bee Hassan as Pulau Pinang Wanita Umno vice chairman and the appointment of Surinam Sadikun to replace Datuk Dayang Mahani Tun Pengiran Ahmad Rafaie as Sabah Wanita Umno vice chairman.

She also appointed heads for nine bureaux. All the appointments were to have been effective from the coming Wanita movement meeting expected to be held in two weeks from the announcement on Monday.

Dr Mahathir said the reshuffle was discussed in the Supreme Council meeting tonight.

The Prime Minister said he explained to the Supreme Council members in the meeting that Siti Zaharah had agreed to reverse her decision on the reshuffle in their meeting yesterday in which Umno secretary general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob was also present.

"Siti Zaharah gave the agreement before Khalil.

"She will not go ahead with the reshuffle, instead the status quo is maintained," said Dr Mahathir.

He said Siti Zaharah had also informed Deputy Prime Minister and Umno vice president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi by telephone tonight that she abided by the party president's advice to reverse her decision.

He said Wanita Umno had a "minor crisis" after the reshuffle was announced.

"As such, I had a discussion with the Wanita chief and she agreed that the reshuffle announced would not have led to a strengthening of the Wanita movement.

"She agreed to withdraw the new appointments and the dismissals," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked if it was the usual practice for Umno Youth and Wanita Umno chiefs to discuss with the party president concerning any reshuffle to be carried out, Dr Mahathir said Siti Zaharah might have forgotten to do so.

Asked if the Supreme Council's decision meant it interfered in Wanita Umno's affairs, he said the Supreme Council had the right to discuss anything related to the party.

"In this matter, the Wanita chief had already made her decision before the Supreme Council expressed its views and concerns in the matter, and I explained to them that the Wanita chief has cancelled her decision," he

said.

Asked whether the decision was made because the two wanita leaders concerned came to see him, Dr Mahathir said that if they did not come to see him, he would still have met Siti Zaharah.

Dr Mahathir also said that the decision was made by Siti Zaharah herself after discussing it with him.

Asked whether the decision would reflect incompetency on the part of Siti Zaharah to lead the movement, Dr Mahathir said: "It is the way of Umno...we are accommodating".

On his advice to Siti Zaharah, Dr Mahathir said he hoped that she would discuss such matters with him before hand.

On whether there would be confusion among party members, especially Wanita members, on the decision reversal, he said there would be none as the leadership would explain the situation, especially to those who were appointed in the reshuffle.

He also said there would be no reshuffle at all levels until after the general election.

-- BERNAMA

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