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Sabbaruddin-resign

SABBARUDDIN CONFIRMS STEPPING DOWN FROM CABINET, AS UMNO SEG-GEN

KUALA LUMPUR, May 19 (Bernama) -- Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Sabbaruddin Chik today confirmed that he will step down from his Cabinet post.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked him to do so at today's Cabinet weekly meeting.

"In politics, stepping down is normal... we can also be removed. This is normal and the normal way. When we're asked to quit, we quit. It's only that I'm not saying I'm quitting because I'm sick," he told reporters at his office here.

Sabbaruddin also confirmed that he would step down as Umno secretary-general.

The Press had earlier speculated about him stepping down from both his cabinet and party posts because of poor health due to his kidney ailment.

Sabbaruddin said that the prime minister need not state the reasons for wanting him to step down because this was the prime minister's prerogative and there was no need to question it.

"I have no problem in leaving the cabinet. It's up to the prime minister. There's no questioning why he wanted me to quit. We can't have such an attitude in the party."

"When you are asked to resign, you resign. You must and willingly do so," he said.

Sabbaruddin said he knew that a cabinet reshuffle involving him was coming when the prime minister asked him early this month to prepare a resignation letter.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to announce a minor cabinet reshuffle at a press conference at his office here tomorrow, according to a release issued by the Press Division of the Prime Minister's Department today.

Asked whether Dr Mahathir's decision to drop him was part of efforts to consolidate the party and the government in facing the coming general election, Sabbaruddin said:

"If taken in the context of wanting to reinforce the party, the inference is that all this while I've failed (in carrying out my duties). If so, I need to ask why have I failed and I deserved to be told.

" I don't know why and don't need to know, what I do know is that a cabinet reshuffle is a normal thing."

He said the question of leaving Umno did not arise at all because his loyalty to the party and Dr Mahathir's leadership was above all else.

"You don't expect me to be joining any party other than Umno. In fact if any of my supporters were to join other parties, they'll be my sworn enemies. As far as the party is concerned there's nothing to worry about. I'm not angry at anyone, so why should I desert Umno," he said.

On his plans upon leaving the cabinet, Sabbaruddin said he had not made any plans yet except that he would strengthen the party machinery at the divisional (Temerloh) level to face the coming general election.

Meanwhile, the scene at his office today was a hive of activity with workers busily packing Sabbaruddin's personal effects.

-- BERNAMA

MHI RZS RYN