

05 JUNE 2000

Mahathir-Appointment

MBs NEED NOT BE APPOINTED STATE UMNO CHIEFS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today indicated a departure from the traditional appointment of menteri besar from Umno as state liaison chiefs or supreme council members.

"Normally yes, (menteri besar appointed as chairman), normal means sometimes it is not normal," the Umno president said after chairing the party's supreme council meeting, here.

He said this when asked whether the menteri besar and chief ministers from Umno would be appointed chairmen of the state Umno liaison bodies as was the norm.

Dr Mahathir, who was expected to announce the appointment of 10 supreme council members in addition to the 25 elected at the party's general assembly last month, however, did not do so.

Instead, he said that the appointments would be announced two weeks from now, before the next council meeting.

The issue of the appointment of Umno liaison chiefs arose following the defeat of four menteri besar and a chief minister in the party elections on May 11.

They are menteri besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman (Johor), Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar (Selangor), Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad (Negeri Sembilan) and Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim (Perlis) and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam.

Abdul Ghani, Abu Hassan, Mohamed Isa and Osu lost in the contest for the vice-presidency while Shahidan failed to retain his supreme council seat.

Under the Umno constitution, the president has the power to appoint 10 supreme council members besides the secretary-general, treasurer and information chief.

Dr Mahathir also said that he would announce the appointment of state Umno liaison chairmen in two weeks.

"We must be careful in making the appointments because we have 10 vacancies (for council members) when there are so many people qualified to sit on the council," he said.

Dr Mahathir gave credence to the possibility that not all the menteri besar would be appointed state Umno liaison chairmen or supreme council members when he said: "For those not appointed (council members), they will be appointed to head the party bureaux that will be set up."

He said the supreme council meeting would be held alternately in Kuala Lumpur and the states every fortnight so that it could see the situation and get closer to the states.

All this while, the supreme council meetings have been held at the Umno headquarters here.

The change was made following a proposal at the general assembly.

Asked whether he would make changes to the party leadership, Dr Mahathir said: "No, not at the moment."

Asked whether there would be difficulty in administering the states if the menteri besar were not appointed the state Umno liaison chairmen, he said: "We will study all that and we will resolve everything."

"If we take all the MBs, others will have no place (in the supreme council)."

Dr Mahathir said not all the menteri besar would be appointed council members because consideration had to be given to others like the Wanita wing and the ministers.

He said that because their chairmen had yet to be appointed, all the state Umno liaison bodies should postpone their conventions.

He said the conventions which were normally held before the general assembly were postponed to reduce the campaigning for the party elections last month.

On the meeting, the first since the general assembly, Dr Mahathir said all the council members agreed on the approach and the topics that needed to be given attention.

"Those present today were only the elected supreme council members and the Umno secretary-general and treasurer and we heard all their opinions," he said.

-- BERNAMA

ara JK