

01/04/2001

Umno forms special panel to verify Fauzi's allegations

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Umno will establish an ad-hoc committee specifically to investigate allegations of money politics and government mismanagement made by the party's Beserah State Assemblyman, Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman.

President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who announced this after chairing the supreme council meeting here today, said the decision was made in view of Fauzi's public statements on the issue.

Asked why special emphasis was given to Fauzi's allegations when the disciplinary board had received many other such complaints, Dr Mahathir said:

"It's because he wants to do something which can do damage to the party. Others all complain directly to us without making any statements. That is why we have to give attention."

The council, Dr Mahathir said, also decided to postpone the Kuantan division meeting until the investigations are concluded.

Beserah falls under the Kuantan division and Fauzi is the head.

"These investigations will be conducted as fast as possible. We ask all parties to co-operate with the committee by providing clear evidence so that action can be taken against those involved in money politics and other offences as alleged by Fauzi," he said.

Fauzi had submitted his resignation letter as the Beserah Assemblyman to Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob on Thursday.

He had earlier lodged a police report against Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, accusing him of mismanaging timber concessions during his tenure as Pahang Menteri Besar.

Dr Mahathir said the accusations against Khalil, who is Umno secretary-general, would also be investigated by the ad-hoc committee.

Asked about Khalil's position in the party pending the outcome of the investigations, Dr Mahathir said that he would not be affected.

"A person is not guilty until proven guilty, and that is the way we operate," he said.

Khalil was also present at the Press conference.

Dr Mahathir also said that action would be taken against those who made false accusations.

"When making allegations, there must be a basis for doing so because it could smear the party," he said.

Asked about Fauzi's position as the Beserah Assemblyman, Dr Mahathir pointed out that Fauzi had not resigned yet.

On the resignation letter submitted by Fauzi to Adnan, Dr Mahathir said the letter was not a resignation letter.

"A State Assemblyman can only resign by submitting a letter of resignation to the Speaker of the State Assembly."

Asked further, Dr Mahathir said Fauzi's intentions were still not clear as he had been quoted as saying that he would not leave Umno.

"He (Fauzi) will have to decide on this, but we will act on his allegations to find out whether they have any basis."

Dr Mahathir said Umno did not want him to resign but added that the party could not force him to stay on.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is also from Pahang, when met later, was asked whether Fauzi's allegations would create increased support for the opposition in Pahang.

He said there would not be major effects and that it was not a problem

peculiar to Pahang.

Asked if the allegations would affect relations among members in the Pahang Umno, Najib said the party had faced many other challenges in the past.

"One strength of Pahang Umno is that we are quick to close ranks," he said.

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said the council also discussed how Umno would continue to explain to Pas the party's aims of holding the Malay unity talks.

He also produced cassette tapes of recorded Pas ceramah to stress how Pas was still busy campaigning although the general election, which was held in 1999, had long passed since.