

02 FEB 2002

PBRS-Jeffrey

JEFFREY WILLING TO FACE KURUP IN CONTEST TO SETTLE DISPUTE

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan is ready to face Tan Sri Joseph Kurup in a contest to settle the dispute over the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) presidency, to which both are staking their claim.

Dr Jeffrey said he was prepared to do this to settle the issue once and for all if the Registrar of Societies (ROS) ordered the party to reconvene its Annual General Meeting (AGM).

He said the majority of the delegates to the recent PBRS congress wanted to see a contest between him and Kurup for the top post.

"I'm ready to do so if the ROS advises the party to reconvene the AGM as a last resort to resolve the problem.

"I'm only offering my service for the good of the party in line with the principle of democracy but unfortunately he (Kurup) tried to avoid the contest and instead suspended my membership in the party," he told Bernama here.

On Thursday, Sabah ROS Director Toisin Gantor said if both parties failed to resolve the problem within the stipulated period and did not apply for an extension, the registrar could take action, including cancelling the party's registration.

Toisin said if there were two camps and both sent their reports, the ROS would have to invoke Section 16 of the Societies Act 1966 which empowers the registrar to issue a show-cause letter to the party and ask it to resolve the dispute within 30 days.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the ROS has the right to take action against PBRS if it had breached the law.

However, Dr Mahathir said: "This is a political issue and as such we have to be cautious because sometimes people try to use the law to undermine a political action."

On the party's annual delegates conference on Jan 28 and 29 which was plunged into confusion because of their dispute, Dr Jeffrey said it was legal and that the outcome of the meeting, including his nomination for and election to the president's post should be accepted and respected by all.

"The meeting was conducted in accordance with the party's constitution and whatever meeting held after Jan 29 was outside the conference," he said.

After pandemonium broke out at the meeting on Jan 29, Kurup's camp adjourned the meeting to the following day, during which Kurup was re-elected president.

Dr Jeffrey asserted that the supreme authority of the party lay with the annual delegates conference as was clearly provided for under Article 25 of the party constitution.

He said it was the delegates who lifted his suspension and subsequently nominated him for the president's post as the said meeting was earlier attended by Kurup, not his own supporters as was reported in the press.

On Jan 25, Kurup exercised his presidential powers under Article 59 of the PBRS constitution to suspend Dr Jeffrey with immediate effect for going against the interest of the party.

Asked whether he had met Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to brief him on the matter, Dr Jeffrey confirmed meeting him but declined to elaborate.

Dr Jeffrey said he was open to discussions with Kurup to find the best

solution to the problems.
-- BERNAMA
NT YBY