

Sapp backs party boss on anti-PM move
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Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) supreme council has today endorsed party president Yong Teck Lee's call for a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. MCPX

"It is a decision reached by consensus after hearing all the views in the supreme council meeting. Majority of the supreme council members supported the motion of no confidence against the prime minister," Yong told reporters.

With this endorsement, the party sends a clear message to the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition that the no-confidence move was a party decision and not one made by only a handful of leaders.

BN had yesterday justified its no-action against the errant component party on the grounds that the call for a no-confidence vote against Abdullah was not Sapp's official stand.

At its supreme council meeting today, the party however did not make a decision on whether it should pull out of BN.

sapp sabah meeting 200608 01Instead, Yong told reporters at a press conference held after the meeting to ask BN secretary-general Tengku Adnan Mansor on Sapp's position in the coalition.

"On the question of the party membership in BN, the matter was discussed. But for the time being, no decision has been made," said Yong.

It appeared that Sapp is throwing the ball back into BN's court on the issue.

sapp sabah meeting 200608 03The marathon supreme council meeting, which began at 10am, did not end until 4.30pm.

All but one members of party supreme council were at the meeting. The only absentee was Eric Enchin Majimbun, the parliamentarian for Sepanggar, who is overseas in Paris.

Yong also said Sapp will be holding a special delegates conference - the party's highest decision-making body - on July 7 to discuss its next move.

ACA to probe Yong

Earlier, the meeting was expected to be a showdown between Yong and his deputy Raymond Tan, who is also Sabah deputy chief minister and infrastructure minister.

sapp sabah meeting 200608 02Tan has slammed his party leader's move against the prime minister, stating that he was "confused and embarrassed" by Sapp's decision.

He added that the party's supreme council was not consulted on the matter and blamed Yong of acting on his own.

However, before the meeting began this morning, Yong and Tan were seen having a 50-minute discussion.

Meanwhile, the Star reported that the Anti-Corruption Agency is investigating Yong over the alleged payment of RM5 million from the sale of shares belonging to a state-owned company to his agents in 1996 when he was Sabah chief minister.

Yong said he received a call from ACA officers this morning regarding the matter.

He however questioned the timing of the probe and said he was expecting BN to unleash its "propaganda machine" against him.

According to Yong, he had already given a lengthy statement to the ACA on the alleged payment many years ago.

Good support for the vocal voice

sapp sabah meeting 200608 07Later at the press conference, Yong was asked if his party would change its stand if Abdullah stepped down.

"It will certainly alter the landscape," he said without elaborating.

Political observers said there was also a growing disenchantment with state Chief Minister Musa Aman's leadership.

However since Umno formed the main bulk of the ruling coalition in the state, all other parties are resigned to play second fiddle within the state coalition.

Yong is the only state BN leader who had dared to question the BN and indirectly Umno's role and policies.

He had taken up various issues that many NGOs and opposition parties in the state have been harping on for decades, especially on the illegal immigrant issue.

At the outset of the press conference, Yong thanked members of the public, including Sabahans overseas, for sending "hundreds of email and SMSes" to party leaders, pledging their support for what the party was doing.

There were too many email messages and SMS to be replied, he added.

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