

...and over to you, Dr Mahathir

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By SHARIFAH ROZITA

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — In a brief, half-hour meeting, **Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad** was handed the chairmanship of the National Front this afternoon.

At the gathering of leaders of the 11 component parties at Sri Taman, outgoing Prime Minister **Datuk Hussein Onn** officially stepped down as Front chairman, making way for **Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir**.

Datuk Hussein, speaking to reporters after the meeting, said he had

nominated **Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir** as the new chairman and this was accepted unanimously by the component party leaders.

He congratulated the new chairman and recorded his thanks to Front leaders and members for their full support and encouragement given to him since he took over from the late **Tun Razak**.

He added that he was confident the Front would continue to have the confidence and trust of the people and to foster greater unity and strength within itself, even though there would

be problems.

The problems, he said, would be just "family problems" and would not affect the strength and unity of the Front, especially in the face of the coming general elections.

"When I say elections, it doesn't mean they are going to come tomorrow," he quipped quickly. This fast remark drew laughter from all those present.

"Even if you ask me, I wouldn't know," he said.

The new Front chairman, **Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir**, who becomes the country's fourth Prime Minister tomorrow at 11 a.m., sat on

Datuk Hussein's right, while Front secretary-general **Encik Ghafar Baba** sat on his left.

MCA leader **Datuk Lee San Choon**, MIC president **Datuk S. Samy Vellu** and PBB (Sarawak) leader **Datuk Amar Haji Abdul Taib manmud** were also present at the briefing for the press.

The MCA leader, **Datuk Lee San Choon**, said the meeting recorded with regret **Datuk Hussein's** decision to step down as the Front chairman and Prime Minister for health reasons.

However, the Front thanked him for taking this step so that the duties of the chairman could be discharged without jeopardising the well-being of the party and country.

His sincerity and integrity have marked him out as a statesman and leader of high standing and his fairness and firmness and uncompromising stand against corruption should be an example to others.

Datuk Hussein has sacrificed much in his political struggle to develop the nation, **Datuk Lee** added.

Under **Datuk Hussein's** chairmanship the Front had carried out its activities with success and increased its political strength, as shown in its resounding victory in the 1978 general elections.

Datuk Lee said **Datuk Hussein's** sense of deep tolerance, patience and moderation in politics, economics and social affairs have helped establish stability and unity in Malaysia.

The Front prayed for his good health and that all his contributions and achievements for the country would be remembered by Malaysians.