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GHAFAR-SUPPORT R R R R R R R R R R  
BM

KOTA BAHARU, FEB 12 (BERNAMA) -- DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER GHAFAR BABA THIS EVENING EXPRESSED OPEN SUPPORT FOR PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD AS THE UMNO PRESIDENT IN CASE OF ANY CONTEST FOR THE POST IN THE UPCOMING SUPREME COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

HE SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AS THE +NUMBER ONE CAPTAIN+ IN THE PARTY AND MENTERIS BESAR AS THE +NUMBER TWO CAPTAINS+ AT STATE LEVEL HAD SUCCEEDED IN COOPERATING WELL AND STRENGTHENING UMNO'S POSITION BY BRINGING THE PARTY TO A SWEEPING VICTORY IN LAST AUGUST'S GENERAL ELECTION.

+I HOPE THAT WITH GOOD COOPERATION AND THE CAPTAINS WE HAVE TODAY, WE WILL REMAIN TO LEAD UMNO FOR SOME TIME,+ HE TOLD PENGKALAN CHEPA UMNO DIVISION MEMBERS AT KAMPUNG TAPANG NEAR HERE.

+I WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE AND FOLLOW DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP BECAUSE I FEEL HE IS A LIBERAL LEADER WHO LISTENS TO THE VIEWS OF THOSE LOWER DOWN THE LINE,+ HE ADDED.

+ALL DECISIONS MADE IN THE CABINET, BARISAN NASIONAL AND UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL ARE THE RESULT OF DISCUSSIONS AND NOT HIS DECISION ALONE.+ -- MORE

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GHAFAR-SUPPORT 2 KOTA BAHARU R R R R R R R R R R

ENCIK GHAFAR STRESSED THAT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP WAS NOT A +DICTATORSHIP+ BECAUSE EVERY DECISION REACHED WAS BASED ON CONSENSUS AND VIEWS THAT HAD UNANIMOUS SUPPORT.

+AS SUCH, BECAUSE ALL DECISIONS (IN THE CABINET, BN AND UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL) ARE MADE WITH MAJORITY AGREEMENT, I AM PREPARED TO SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL CONSEQUENCES, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD,+ HE ADDED.

ENCIK GHAFAR, WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A +FOLLOWER+ WHO OBEYS ORDERS, SAID HE MIGHT CONTEST IN THE APRIL SUPREME COUNCIL ELECTIONS BUT HAD NOT DECIDED YET FOR WHAT POST.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS LATER, HE SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR +IS MY BOSS+ AND HE COULD WORK TOGETHER WITH THE PRIME MINISTER IN SERVING THE NATION BECAUSE HE LIKED HIM.

ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD ACCEPT THE RANTAU PANJANG UMNO DIVISION NOMINATION OF HIM FOR THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT POST, ENCIK GHAFAR, WHO IS AN UMNO VICE-PRESIDENT, SAID: +THERE IS NO HURRY.+ -- MORE  
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B E367 AAE  
GHAFAR-SUPPORT 3 KOTA BAHARU R R R R R R R R R R

ENCIK GHAFAR SAID WHETHER HE WOULD CHALLENGE INCUMBENT DATUK MUSA HITAM FOR THE DEPUTY PRESIDENCY WOULD BE MADE KNOWN +WHEN THE TIME COMES.+ DATUK MUSA RECENTLY ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO DEFEND HIS POST.

ON UMNO'S MEMBERSHIP, HE SAID IT WAS EXPECTED TO INCREASE FROM 1.5 MILLION AT PRESENT TO TWO MILLION IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS, INCLUSIVE OF ABOUT 200,000 BUMIPUTERAS IN SABAH.

HE HOPED THE WIDER MEMBERSHIP BASE WOULD STRENGTHEN UMNO'S POSITION AS THE BACKBONE OF THE GOVERNMENT, NOT ONLY QUANTITATIVELY BUT ALSO QUALITATIVELY. -- BERNAMA

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