

Musa takes final leave of politics

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — It's final. Former Deputy Prime Minister and MP for Kota Tinggi Datuk Musa Hitam is quitting politics and will not contest in the general election.

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Datuk Musa made this decision as he was no longer interested in politics.

He said he spoke to Datuk Musa in New York recently after being told by Johor Menteri Besar and State Umno chief Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that Datuk Musa was adamant about giving up his MP's post.

"He again repeated his decision not to stand (in the Kota Tinggi parliamentary constituency) when I spoke to him."

He said Datuk Musa also told him that no amount of persuasion by anyone would change his mind.

Speaking to newsmen after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting, Dr Mahathir said Datuk Musa would continue to volunteer his services to the country.

Datuk Musa is Malaysia's special envoy to the United Nations.

Dr Mahathir said Datuk Musa told him that he did not want to make a premature announcement as he did not want his supporters to flood him with telegrams and telephone calls to reconsider his move.

He also said the decision by Datuk Musa was linked to an earlier statement he made in a libel suit which he won.

Datuk Musa had said then "this (judgment) wraps up my political career nicely".

Dr Mahathir said he had referred this statement to Datuk Musa in their telephone conversation.

"Datuk Musa said he did not want to give an accurate explanation when asked by the Press then as he did not want to make a premature announcement.

"If he had explained exactly what he meant by the statement, he would have to deal with so many appeals to reconsider his decision to quit his seat and politics."

Asked if he accepted Datuk Musa's decision, he said: "Datuk Musa has made it clear he wants to retire from politics."

To another question, he said Datuk Musa's name was on the initial list of the Umno candidates from Jo-

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hor. This list was discussed last week.

"Now his name is not in the final, approved list of Umno candidates."

Later, Tan Sri Muhyiddin, who attended the supreme council meeting, told newsmen that Umno members, particularly those in Johor, should respect Datuk Musa's decision.

"I am not denying that some supporters of Datuk Musa will be disappointed but we must accept it without any suspicion," he said.

He added that he had telephoned Datuk Musa in New York last week to say that his name had been included in the Umno line-up for the general election.

"Datuk Musa expressed his gratitude at the inclusion of his name, but made his decision not to contest. He also said he was satisfied with his present position."

Tan Sri Muhyiddin said he had been informed by Mersing MP Datuk Abdul Ajib Ahmad that Datuk Musa would issue a statement on his decision before nomination day.

Asked if Datuk Musa would help in the campaigning, he said Datuk Musa had not made such an indication.

However, Datuk Musa had pledged to give moral support and is confident in the BN's ability to win, he said.

Tan Sri Muhyiddin urged Umno members to maintain party unity and focus their attention on ensuring a BN victory.

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