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Mahathir-Successor

DR MAHATHIR WANTS TO STEP DOWN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Correcting para 1 to read "could' instead of "would".

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight he would like to step down as soon as possible but before doing that he had a responsibility to ensure that his successor could carry on where he left off.

"It will take at least one year as next year will be the Umno election," he said in a live interview over Biz Asia, a CNN programme.

The prime minister was interviewed by Biz Asia's Lorraine Hahn who had earlier asked Dr Mahathir how long he plans to stay on as prime minister as he is now the longest serving prime minister in Asia.

"I would like to step down as soon as possible. I have a responsibility to make sure my successor can carry on where I leave off. It will take at least one year as next year will be the Umno election," he said.

Asked how he like to be remembered, Dr Mahathir said: "I dont care much whether people remember me or not but I like to see all we have planned materialise.

"I am not important, I am just passing through," he said.

Asked what more he hoped to achieve, having successfully led Malaysia for 17 years, Dr Mahathir said he like to see Malaysia become a developed nation by 2020.

However, to do that, everything must be in place, all the right steps and all the right policies, so that the succeeding prime minister could carry on from there, he said.

To a question on whether he would call for an early general election if former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's supporters' reform movement gathered speed, Dr Mahathir said he did not think it would come to that.

"I dont think the reform movement would snowball into a big movement. At the moment, it concerns a few people and a minority group," he said.

On whether the government could control the reform movement if it continued, he said: "We have until the year 2000 for elections so I think we have plenty of time to do that."

-- BERNAMA

ARA JK