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Mahathir-Indonesia

CHOICE OF GUS DUR, MEGAWATI AUGURS WELL- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said the choice of Abdurrahman Wahid as Indonesia's new President and Megawati Sukarno as its Vice President augurs well for the future of the biggest Muslim country in the world.

The Prime Minister said the Indonesian presidential election went off without serious incidents and the People's Consultative Assembly had chosen the President and Vice President wisely, opting to work together rather than confront each other.

He said every party of significance was represented in the government and the choice of Abdurrahman, better known as Gus Dur as President pacified the Muslim majority while Megawati's party which has the biggest number of seats but not an absolute majority seems satisfied to have the Vice Presidency.

Even Golkar, chose to join the coalition, accepting a number of ministerial posts.

"There seems to be reconciliation among the major parties and this augurs well for the future of Indonesia," said Dr Mahathir in his article published in the "Mainichi Shimbun" today.

He said although Gus Dur's health was considered frail, he was supported by a strong team of his own.

Dr Mahathir said it was natural for Indonesia whose population of 220 million was 90 per cent Muslim, to want a Muslim as their leader when they were given the choice.

Had Megawati won with an absolute majority there would have been no choice, he said.

He said although Megawati's party won the biggest number of seats, she would have to get the support of other parties to have the majority support and such support could only come from Muslim parties.

"This (support) she could not get because Muslims generally do not like to be led by women," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Golkar's decision not to put up any candidate resulted in Gus Dur getting its support and together with support from the other Muslim parties and the provincial representatives, Gus Dur was able to defeat Megawati.

The Prime Minister said Megawati could have opted to be in the opposition but wisely, she chose to be Vice President and so confrontation was avoided.

Dr Mahathir said the Asean countries want Indonesia to have stability not only for Indonesia's sake but also for the good of the region.

"The relatively smooth elections and the wise choice of President and Vice President together with the decision of Golkar to participate in the government should result in relative political stability in Indonesia," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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