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Mahathir-Duty

I HAVE A DUTY TO CARRY ON, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By Khairdzir Yunus

TOKYO, June 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he has a duty to the country to carry on as Prime Minister until his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is able and ready to take over.

Dr Mahathir said this at a meeting with Japanese editors, who among other things, asked about his statement that he would pass on the baton to Abdullah after the next general election.

The particular statement appeared in a Japanese newspaper, the Mainichi Shimbun, recently.

He said: "I have a responsibility to ensure the succeeding prime minister can continue with the policies of the country and keep the country stable."

Dr Mahathir said he had told the newspaper that he would be handing over the post to his would-be successor after the general election "which could be a year, two years or three years and so on after the election."

"At the most I have one more term because after that I don't have the capacity (to carry on)," said the 73-year-old prime minister who has been at the helm for 18 years.

This would be his reason for handing over the post to his successor and not because he was fed up or bored with the job, Dr Mahathir said.

On whether he would find it conducive now to call for a general election with the Malaysian economy recovering, Dr Mahathir said: "All that is certain is that it will be held before April."

However, he said, he would take all the factors into consideration before deciding on an election date.

"I agree that it would be conducive to hold the election...I am well, the people are happy, we have no unemployment or with 2.5 per cent of unemployment it is considered a full employment, and the opposition can't get along with each other well.

"As we have seen a good time, there may be a better time to hold the election later...we give a chance to evaluate things," he added. -- BERNAMA

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