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Leaders, citizens welcome Pak Lah's new position

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Leaders and Malaysians throughout the country welcomed the appointment of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Deputy Prime Minister, calling it an apt and wise choice based on his experience.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was wise in choosing Abdullah for the post.

He said Abdullah was very capable, well-liked by fellow politicians and the public, and has always been a team player.

"Being Foreign Minister for close to eight years, Abdullah has many friends among international leaders, and this will certainly help stimulate trade and investment."

Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib described the appointment as a wise choice made "after careful thought".

Ramli, who is State Umno liaison chairman, said the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister was needed to strengthen the administration and stabilise the economic situation.

Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin said Abdullah's appointment would result in greater prominence for Malaysia.

He said being an astute statesman and former bureaucrat, the former Foreign Minister would certainly get recognition from world leaders.

Abu Zahar added that Abdullah's appointment would certainly please Umno members as he is known to be religious, clean and consistent in his principles.

Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said Abdullah would be able to discharge his duties as Deputy Prime Minister effectively.

"His tenure as a civil servant before joining politics will help him in his task."

He also said the move to defer the party polls had helped to calm down the situation.

"Today, people have stopped talking about the polls ... outsiders campaigning for certain groups have also returned to their respective States," he told reporters after opening a property fair at a shopping complex.

He said he fully agreed with Dr Mahathir that the postponement of the party elections would enable Umno to concentrate its energy and resources on the general election.

"Members will not get confused by internal problems of the party," said Khalil, who is also Pahang Umno liaison chief.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said the decision was made in the interest of the country and the party.

"National interest must be placed above everything else. We have to focus on the general election, deal with current issues and strive to enhance public confidence in the leadership."

In Alor Star, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid said Abdullah was the right person to be Deputy Prime Minister in view of his vast experience.

Gerakan Youth chief Datuk Chang Ko Youn described Abdullah as an experienced, dynamic and honest politician.

Chang, who is also Perak Urban Development and Local Government Committee chairman, said: "The new line-up will boost the confidence of Malaysians and foreign investors."

Meanwhile, Sabah Umno secretary Datuk Yahya Hussin believed that Abdullah would carry out his duties effectively based on his previous

experiences and seniority in the party.

Sarawak's Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu vice-president Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud felt that the appointment would reduce the burden of the Prime Minister who has taken over extra ministerial duties since early September.

In Penang, several individuals and organisations came out in support of Abdullah.

Wanita Gerakan national chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen expressed her "happiness" and congratulated the Penang Umno chief.

"Pak Lah is a man of strong principles and sound values who has weathered many political storms," she said.

Umno Simpang Enam branch chairman chief Haniffa Hamid expressed relief over the Cabinet reshuffle and lauded the Prime Minister's decision to relinquish the Finance and Home portfolios.

Malaysian Indian Restaurant Owners Association president Ramalingam Pillai said Abdullah was an ideal choice. "He is capable and charismatic."

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