

06 MAY 1999

Rafidah-Mahathir

RAFIDAH WANTS MAHATHIR NOT TO TALK ABOUT RESIGNING

ALOR SETAR, May 6 (Bernama) -- International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz today appealed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad not to talk about resigning.

"I'm making an open appeal to Dr Mahathir not to mention about resigning, retiring or handing over duty to his successor," she said addressing a gathering of Kedah women leaders here.

The country still needed Dr Mahathir's services and continued stewardship, she said.

Rafidah said she made such appeal to minimise public speculation.

"Let's leave to Allah the question of the prime minister stepping down," she said.

"Newspapers also shouldn't ask when Dr Mahathir is retiring. There's still so much that we need to do," she said.

Moreover, Rafidah said, the people were also relieved with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's declaration that he was not in a hurry to assume the prime ministership.

Speaking to reporters later, Rafidah said an opposition proposal to hold a public debate with Umno on secularism would not help overcome problems at the grass-root level.

It would need much explaining for the masses to counter lies spread by the opposition, she said.

Rafidah was asked to comment on Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat's invitation to Umno to hold a debate with PAS on secularism.

-- BERNAMA

JM RYN