

09 JAN 1999

Mahathir-Abdullah

THE DPM NORMALLY BECOMES PM, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that in line with normal practice, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was appointed deputy prime minister yesterday, will become the prime minister to succeed him.

Dr Mahathir, who was asked whether Abdullah will become his successor, said: "According to normal practice, that is the case."

"Normally, the deputy becomes my successor but I had three who didn't become (my successor).

"Nowadays, it's difficult to say...I'm scared to say, but normally, yes," he told reporters after a visit to the Immigration Department headquarters, here.

Abdullah, who was foreign minister, was among those involved in a Cabinet reshuffle announced by Dr Mahathir yesterday. He has also been appointed home minister.

Dr Mahathir said that he had taken into account Umno's unifying factor when appointing Abdullah as the deputy prime minister.

Asked why he was not holding any portfolio, the first time being so since he became prime minister, Dr Mahathir said that it was to reduce his burden and to give him time to concentrate on his duties as prime minister which were becoming more time consuming during the current economic crisis.

He said that previously, some of his duties including making contacts and visiting the various states were carried out by his deputy.

"I have not visited the states for quite some time...it is good to visit the states and meet party members and the people," he said.

The prime minister said that he would conduct visits to the states to explain to the people the current political situation in the country.

"I already made one round before this to explain the economic crisis. Soon after, a political crisis erupted but I did not have time (to make visits) and the opportunity to make an explanation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he would commence his visits to the various states after the Hari Raya.

"Party members appear to be confused over the current political situation," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is home minister, earlier attended a gathering of the department's staff.

Also present were Deputy Home Minister Datuk Mohamed Tajol Rosli Ghazali and Immigration Director-General Datuk Aseh Che Mat.

At the function, he received the department's work programme for this year.

He later toured the department's Federal Territory branch and presented the 250,000th copy of the machine readable passport (MRP) to an applicant.

The MRP, which bears an identity chip of the passport holder, was launched by Dr Mahathir in March last year.

The prime minister also launched the expatriate identity card and the department's "Serve With a Smile" campaign.

-- BERNAMA

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