

Abdul Hamid quits as Minister in PM's Dept

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By M.K. Megan

PUTRAJAYA, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman has tendered his resignation as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Abdul Hamid submitted his resignation letter to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Wednesday before the Prime Minister left for a working visit to Myanmar.

Abdul Hamid announced at a Press conference at his office today that he made the decision to enable him to concentrate on efforts aimed

at uniting the Muslims.

In a three-page statement, Abdul Hamid said: "I took this decision willingly after consulting the leadership and after giving a lengthy thought on the country and its political situation, especially among Muslims."

He also said he had applied to resign to enable the Prime Minister to appoint another person to carry out the Government's official duties on Islamic affairs.

Asked whether Dr Mahathir has accepted his resignation, Abdul Ha-

mid said: "The Prime Minister will inform me when he returns from Myanmar".

On whether he was resigning due to health reasons, he said it was not the case.

"My health has been so-so for many years. When I cannot take it, I take a break for a short while and when I recover I continue working.

"But health is not the main reason for my resignation," he said.

Asked whether he had resigned because he failed in his efforts to unite the Muslims, Abdul Hamid

said it was not.

He had served the Prime Minister's Department for 16 years, six years as a director-general of the Islamic Affairs Division and 10 years as a Deputy Minister and a Minister.

"It is time for others to take over. However, I will continue to serve in another capacity," he said, adding that he would accept any position given by the Prime Minister.

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'Sacrifice for the sake of our unity'

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Abdul Hamid, who is Sik Umno division chief, also took the opportunity at the Press conference to explain his responsibilities and duties on Islamic affairs as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

In order to achieve the aspirations of Islam as a way of life, he said, it has to involve two components which were inter-related.

The first component is the development, administration and management and propagation of Islamic teaching which focuses on *fardhu ain* (compulsory for individuals).

While the second component requires the supremacy of Islam which could be reflected through the management of the country towards achieving prosperity in life in the aspects of economy, security and freedom which is

known as *fardhu kifayah* (compulsory for community)

Abdul Hamid said while Muslims fully understood the first component, they had less understanding of the second component.

"This lack of understanding has caused many problems in the community and hampered efforts to develop and strengthen the Malays.

"All programmes and development activities were not recognised as related to Islamic practices.

"More unfortunate for us in Malaysia, the gap between *fardhu ain* and *fardhu kifayah* is widening and more conspicuous through public discussions."

This, he said, had led to diversion of opinions among the Muslims to the extent of causing accusations beyond the boundaries of *syarak* which was dangerous

to Malay unity especially in the political aspect.

Abdul Hamid said he wanted to devote his time, in any capacity, to help achieve the cause.

"I am compelled to be involved in this matter with full dedication and I feel that the call for sacrifice has come for the sake of our unity," he said.

With him at the Press conference were his wife Datin Seri Jamilah Mohd Said, director-general of special affairs department in the Information Ministry Datuk Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, former Minister of Public Enterprises and Umno supreme council member Datuk Yusof Nor and about 20 other staff members from the Islamic Affairs Department.

Following his resignation, Dr Mahathir is expected to reshuffle the Cabinet when he returns from Myanmar.