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Mahathir-Retire

DR MAHATHIR THINKING OF RETIRING BUT NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT IT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is thinking about retiring and wants some time for himself but is not supposed to talk about his plans.

"Yes, I want to retire. I am 76 but I don't belong to myself, I belong to the public. Whatever I do, I must think of its consequences. There are people who say that if I say things like this there would be a scramble for power in the party (Umno). They don't want that. So what can I say?" he said.

He said he could not talk much on his retirement as his cabinet colleagues had told him not to talk about it as it could give rise to problems.

"I too want a few years for myself before I die, I want to write, I want to write a bit, travel a bit. On the contrary, the older I become, the more work I have. I don't get to go on holidays like I used to," he said in an interview with the New Straits Times and Utusan Malaysia, published today.

Asked how he managed to juggle his position as prime minister and finance minister, he said he could manage both the positions as he knew how to arrange his work.

He said he worked almost all the time, replying letters at home and he meeting a steady stream of visitors in the office from morning till afternoon.

"If I don't see them, they will get angry and they will say that when we need votes, we come and see them, but now they want to see us they can't, they will say we are arrogant. I want to see 1,000 people a day, if I can," he added.

Asked if he ever gets enough sleep, he said he got about six hours of sleep daily as he had to rest in order to work the following day.

He said that during weekends, he met people for an hour or two but the rest of the time was to complete his work.

"Even when I'm on holiday, I bring along my work, I do my own writing there. When it comes to reading, I read anytime, I never stop, in the car, in the bathroom," said the prime minister.

On the cabinet, he said he was satisfied with all the ministers and there was no reason for him "to get rid of people."

Asked if he was grooming anyone to take over the leadership of Umno and the country, he said his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, was there to replace him.

"But I must be responsible, it's quite possible I drop dead tomorrow and I leave the party without leadership. That would be very irresponsible of me so I'm grooming the leadership, Pak Lah (Abdullah) is there," he said.

Asked if HE would consider a senior minister's appointment, he said he would not but "if my views are needed once in a while, that becomes a duty for me, but to impose myself after my welcome is finished, I wouldn't do, its not my way."

On his feelings after being in the cabinet for 27 long years he said, he did not feel it as times passes quickly when one is busy.

"I have a lot of work to do. Many people want to see me, there are many problems to be solved...therefore, I don't have time to think about time...week after week passes.

"I feel 27 years is not a long time until I look at my old photographs...I had a lot of hair in the past, but not anymore now," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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