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I respect Hamid's decision to resign, says Abdullah

MALACCA, Sat. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today said he respected Datuk Paduka Abdul Hamid Othman's decision to resign.

He said Hamid had told him that he wanted to be a mubaligh (missionary) and focus on issues relating to Islam, Muslims and Malays.

Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister, said Hamid had also told him he did not want to be restricted by Government work.

Abdullah said there were misconceptions about Islam which had to be corrected.

He added that there were some who claimed that Malays need only learn about Islam and nothing else, thereby disregarding fields such as engineering or economics.

"Such views and misconceptions would only result in Muslims losing out."

Abdullah said there were also misconceptions that Muslims need not strive for excellence for fear of "riak" (excessively proud of one's achievements).

He pointed out that in the past, Muslims had achieved excellence and as a result, Islam had progressed.

"I certainly hope that Hamid would be able to explain this to the people, and at the grassroots level to clear such misconceptions."

Abdullah said he was happy that Hamid did not resign as a Senator or Umno Supreme Council member.

On possible replacements, he replied that it was up to the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to decide.

Meanwhile, Umno information chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Hamid's resignation was a loss to the country but that his decision was respected.

Mustapa believed that Hamid would continue to contribute to the country.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said Hamid's resignation came as a surprise.

"Hamid was hardworking and did a good job. The Prime Minister might decide to utilise Hamid's talents and skills in another capacity."

Abdul Kadir also said he had not heard rumours about a Cabinet reshuffle.

"The present Cabinet is only a year old, but the PM might have other ideas."

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