

More urge Dr M to stay on as PM

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But many accept fact that he will retire someday

KUALA LUMPUR: More political leaders, business groups and Malaysians yesterday urged Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to remain as Prime Minister although many also accepted the fact that he must eventually vacate the post.

In Kangar, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said the people must also realise the 76-year-old leader might wish to retire one day.

"I share the same sentiments as Umno members and people throughout the country that Dr Mahathir should continue as PM but at the same time, we must also accept the fact that he will one day vacate the post.

"The world also does not want him to resign. I understand that Arab nations and other world leaders have asked him not to leave," Shahidan, an Umno supreme council member, said after meeting local tobacco growers at Bukit Temiang here yesterday.

Shahidan said he chaired the state Umno liaison committee meeting on Sunday

night and briefed leaders and members on what transpired at the Umno general assembly over the weekend.

In Kota Kinabalu, Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said Dr Mahathir must be given time to rest and think about his future.

Chong said the nation still needed Dr Mahathir's leadership, as Malaysia was facing uncertainties and challenges.

Kadazandusun Chamber of Commerce and Industry member Datuk Christine Tibok said that Dr Mahathir's resignation announcement was a "wake up" call for all Malaysians.

"It can be seen as a call by him to Malaysians not to be complacent. The announcement could have also come due to his disappointment over certain things," said Tibok, the United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut (Upko) Wanita chief.

Sabah Umno state information chief Datuk Rahim Ismail said Umno members must accept the reality that Dr Mahathir and other party leaders would not be

around forever.

Former teacher S.M. Muthu said Dr Mahathir's announcement was "inevitable."

"No one can deny that he has done an outstanding service to the nation but one day he has to retire and we have to be prepared for such an eventuality," said Muthu, the Sabah Environmental Protection Association secretary-general.

The country's 16 public university heads voiced their support for Dr Mahathir's leadership and pledged their commitment towards continued excellence in education.

"We are all shocked and concerned over what is happening. However, it is the Prime Minister's decision. He did say that he would retire when the time was right, Vice-Chancellors and Rectors Committee chairman Tan Sri Prof Dr Abu Hassan Othman said in a statement.

"Right now his leadership is still needed," he said.

In Penang, the state Puteri Umno expressed its grati-

tude to Dr Mahathir for retracting his resignation decision.

In a statement yesterday, its chief Azlina Mehtab Mohd Ishaq said the movement understood Dr Mahathir's disappointment with the attitude of Malays.

"We, as the younger generation, too felt disheartened with a group of Malays that wants the Government's help but is the first to blame it when problems arise," she said.

She said the movement was proud to have Dr Mahathir as a party president who was willing to sacrifice himself for the Malay race.

Gerakan said the responsibility to change the people's ways could not be shouldered by Dr Mahathir alone.

Party vice-chairman Datuk Dr S. Vijayarajam said it depended a great deal upon Barisan Nasional leaders and members to see that it was done.

In Kuala Lumpur, the Backbenchers Club voiced its support for the continued leadership of Dr Mahathir.