

■ KUALA LUMPUR

Nst - 2 JUL 2002

10,000 Umno members to welcome PM

SOME 10,000 Umno members from across the country are expected to gather at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang early tomorrow morning to welcome home Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from overseas, Umno information chief Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayub said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir left for Naples, Italy, on June 23, with his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, for a holiday.

Only the day before, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, stunned the nation by announcing at the close of the 56th Umno general assembly that he was resigning from all his party and government posts.

Dr Mahathir is also Barisan Nasional chairman and Finance Minister.

About an hour after his announcement and after meeting the Umno supreme council, Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced that Dr Mahathir had agreed to retract his resignation.

With a mandate from the Umno supreme council, the party's management committee led by Abdullah met Dr Mahathir the next day in Seri Perdana, Putrajaya, to persuade him to stay on.

Last Tuesday, Abdullah announced on national television that Dr Mahathir had agreed to stay on in his party and government posts until October next year, a time-frame that provided for a smooth transition of power.

Dr Mahathir also confirmed Abdullah as his successor.