

Abdullah: I am touched by PM's trust in me

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today he was touched by the confidence and trust placed in him by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who openly named him as his successor.

In thanking Dr Mahathir for his confidence, Abdullah said he would work to the best of his ability so as not to disappoint Dr Mahathir, Umno and the people.

The Deputy Prime Minister said this when asked to comment on the public endorsement by Dr Mahathir that Abdullah was his successor when he retires after the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in October next year.

Dr Mahathir, on his return from a 10-day vacation in Europe, expressed support for his deputy to be his successor and urged Umno leaders and members, Barisan Nasional leaders and the people to give strong support to Abdullah.

"I believe Dr Mahathir must have given serious thought before he made the public statement," Abdullah said.

"I was deeply touched on hearing Dr Mahathir making a public statement that I am his successor, especially when he asked the people attending the welcoming ceremony for him this morning to support me," he said.

Dr Mahathir spoke to more than 10,000 people comprising Umno and BN component party members and the public at the gathering which was televised live by RTM.

Abdullah admitted that it would not be an easy task for him to follow the footsteps of Dr Mahathir who was a successful and well-known leader in the world.

"To me, I will always look upon him as a leader who guided me and advised me from time to time in the course of discharging my duties. I very much value his guidance and advice which will be of great help to me later."

As for now, Abdullah said, being Dr Mahathir's deputy, he would continue his duties as usual.

Asked whether he received similar pledges of support from Umno and BN component party leaders as Dr Mahathir's chosen successor, Abdullah said: "Supreme Council members, Menteri Besar and State Umno liaison chiefs have openly voiced their support for me."

He said they pledged their support at last week's supreme council meeting which discussed Dr Mahathir's decision to relinquish his Government and party posts.

Abdullah said BN leaders also expressed similar support for him at the BN supreme council meeting convened to discuss Dr Mahathir's decision last week.

He expressed his gratitude and thanked Umno and BN leaders for their support for him.