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Mahathir-Abdullah

ABDULLAH TO CARRY OUT DUTIES OF PRIME MINISTER

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, will carry out the duties of prime minister when he is abroad for one month for a holiday and a working visit.

He leaves for London tonight en route to New York where he will address the World Economic Forum and attend the Asia Networking Dinner prior to his vacation.

"He'll be carrying out the (PM's) duties...he is, unofficially, acting (PM)," he told reporters after launching the first anniversary celebrations of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya and the Souq (bazaar) here.

Asked whether Abdullah would be carrying out the PM's duties officially, he said: "Official or unofficial, I don't know. People are bothered about protocol...I don't really care about protocol," he said.

Abdullah will also carry out the duties of finance minister.

"If I'm not here, he has to take my place. Certainly someone will have to take over those duties...there's got to be someone. If anything happens, surely they couldn't be looking for me," said Dr Mahathir, who is also finance minister.

On the economic stimulus package totalling RM7.3 billion introduced by the government in March and September last year, he said that 70 per cent of the amount had been utilised.

He said that a target had been set for the amount to be spent in another month or two.

The focus of the package is to generate economic activities and ensure a fair and wide distribution of benefits to a large segment of the population including an increased number of Bumiputera contractors and those dependent on welfare assistance.

Asked to comment on the statement by the office of the Registrar of Societies (ROS) in Kota Kinabalu that they will study the report on the conduct of the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs) congress before taking any action, he said that they need to view it from the aspect of whether or not the law had been breached.

"If they have done something against the law, I think the ROS has the right to take action.

"But this is a political issue. As such, we have to be cautious because sometimes people try to use the law to undermine a political action," he said.

The PBRs, a component party of the Barisan Nasional (BN), is faced with uncertainty after Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan and Tan Sri Joseph Kurup were both declared president by their supporters at the party's seventh congress in separate party elections.

-- BERNAMA

SHS AFY RM