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Mahathir-BN (Reaction)

BN LEADERS RELIEVED OVER DR M'S DECISION TO STAY ON

KUALA LUMPUR, June 22 (Bernama) -- Barisan Nasional leaders today expressed relief over Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to stay on in his party posts including that of Barisan Nasional Chairman.

Dr Mahathir announced that he was resigning from all party posts at the end of his winding up speech at the Umno General Assembly here today sending shockwaves across the whole nation.

After pleadings from Umno Supreme Council members including Deputy President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and unanimous approval of a motion by the Assembly delegates calling on him to withdraw his resignation, Dr Mahathir decided to stay on.

Dr Mahathir's decision was announced to the Umno General Assembly by Abdullah.

MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik expressing relief over Dr Mahathir's decision to stay on, said his leadership was still very much needed for many more years.

"Thank God. Thank God, I'm sure the whole country is relieved now," he told Bernama.

MCA Deputy President Datuk Lim Ah Lek said that God had answered his prayers that Dr Mahathir would reconsider his decision to step down.

He said initially when he heard the announcement he prayed that Dr Mahathir would reconsider it as the country and the government still needed his leadership.

"The country and government still very much need him as he is a man of dynamism and is respected by all races in the country and the whole world," he said when contacted.

Lim Ah Lek said it would be very hard to replace Dr Mahathir and Umno's reaction and that of the people to his earlier announcement to resign showed that they very much wanted him to stay on.

MCA Vice President Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting in an immediate reaction said Dr Mahathir had done so much for the country and his leadership was still very much needed.

"I would like to thank him for reconsidering his earlier decision and what the BN needs to do now is to unite under his leadership," he said.

Another MCA Vice President Datuk Chua Jui Meng also uttered relief that the Prime Minister after much persuasion had agreed to withdraw his resignation.

"We consider him a fatherly figure not just for Umno but the whole country and he still has so much more to contribute," he said.

Meanwhile, MIC President Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu welcomed Dr Mahathir's decision to stay on as Umno president and BN chairman.

"We will give him the full backing to bring the nation forward," he said.

Gerakan President Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said the party hoped Dr Mahathir would carry on leading the country, Umno and BN for a long time.

"The country needs him. We need him as a leader of the BN as well as the country," he said.

He said the Gerakan would give Dr Mahathir its fullest support.

Dr Lim said most importantly the people should analyse Dr Mahathir's presidential speech at the Umno General Assembly when he called on the Malays to change their mindset and be ever ready to accept changes.

"Gerakan takes very seriously what he had said, whether it was aimed at the Malay community or the whole country it does not matter."

"We need to change to face the challenges in the new global order. We must change our mindset to fit ourselves into better positions," he added.

Expressing his relief that Dr Mahathir had retracted his decision, Dr Lim said the whole nation should now settle down quickly and do what needed to be done in order to be a more respectable and prosperous nation.

Meanwhile, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat has described Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to remain as Umno president and withdraw his resignation from his party posts as a great relief to all Malaysians.

Chong, who is Sabah Barisan Nasional Chairman, said the nation very much needed the Prime Minister's leadership.

"It is a relief to all Malaysians that he retracted his decision...the nation needs him," he said.

Asked whether Dr Mahathir has stated how long more he was prepared to lead Umno, Aziz said, "No. God willing, this will not happen again and what is important is that we have conveyed the appeal by the people to him.

After an adjournment of about 45 minutes, Abdullah re-entered the hall and the permanent chairman requested him to make the announcement.

"I have conveyed to Dr Mahathir that what the people and the delegates want is to give their 100 per cent support and appeal for him to withdraw his decision.

"The Prime Minister agreed that I make the announcement that he will continue to lead us," he said.

He said that the Prime Minister wished to remain with his family at that time.

The general assembly ended with Sulaiman's announcement after the short speech by Abdullah.

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