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Business community expresses relief

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The business community and prominent individuals collectively expressed relief over Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to remain as Umno president and Barisan National chairman.

Most agreed that his leadership was needed for the nation's prosperity and that it was not a suitable time for him to step down.

The president of the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents Tunku Datuk Seri Iskandar Tunku Abdullah said he was pleased that Dr Mahathir had retracted his resignation.

"As we know he has been a strong supporter for tourism, so much so that the industry has become a major economic engine for Malaysia.

"We hope that he will continue to see through the many measures that he has put in place for the country," he said.

Malaysian Employers' Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardon said: "We were shocked by the announcement but are grateful that he will resume his duties as normal. He is best regarded as a leader who can resolve any issues and problems which threaten the country, that's why he can't resign now."

The Malaysian Indian Business Association president P. Sivakumar expressed happiness that Dr Mahathir had retracted his resignation adding that his leadership was still needed.

Pasarakyat Sdn Bhd managing director Steve Wong said Dr Mahathir had made the ultimate sacrifice of making the country and its people stand united.

"This is the strength for him to continue leading both the party and the Government. He cries and begs for the rakyat to change their mind-set and attitude," he said.

National Union of Plantation Workers national executive secretary A. Navakundan hoped that Dr Mahathir will continue his duties for many more years to come.

"The plantation workers still need his support and what he did for us over the past years was really tremendous. He should not leave us now but continue to be our guiding light," he said.

The Selangor and Federal Territory Eurasian Association president Laksamana Pertama (R) Datuk Nick Peterson said the association strongly supported his leadership.

Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, an economist who is now the corporate adviser to Sungei Way Group of companies, said if Dr Mahathir's announcement was intended to shock the nation, "then that was the best thing to do."

"It is a wake-up call. Not just for Umno, but to all Malaysians. It is time that we change our mindset and thinking to prepare ourselves for globalisation," he said.

Social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said he was very relieved that Dr Mahathir had been convinced to stay on adding that the entire nation had been stunned with his announcement.

"I regard him as a very capable, dynamic and visionary leader who is very blunt and straight-forward. The entire nation needs him, and I really hope when he returns from his holidays he continues to perform his duties as our leader," he said.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations president Prof Hamdan Adnan also expressed his relief that Dr Mahathir had been persuaded to

stay on as Umno president, calling him the "best person to lead the country".

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