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Zainuddin-Mahathir/BM

ZAINUDDIN DOES NOT CONCUR WITH VIEW THAT PM SHOULD STAY ON

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- The Parliamentary Secretary to the Information Ministry Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said today that he does not concur with the view that the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, should reconsider his decision to step down and should continue as Prime Minister.

The person who expressed that view had unwittingly tried to belittle and undermine the ability of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to serve as Prime Minister of Malaysia, he said.

Zainuddin said he was elated by Dr Mahathir's statement to CNN that Abdullah had all the qualities needed to be Prime Minister.

"Dr Mahathir should in fact have stepped down earlier but circumstances in 1997-1999 forced him to stay on in the interest of the nation and the party. I feel there are no such pressing circumstances at present," he told Bernama.

Former Finance Minister and MP for Gua Musang Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had said that Dr Mahathir could withdraw his decision to step down as there had been requests for such a move from many groups including the Kelantan Umno Convention.

"I am amazed that those who previously tried to topple Dr Mahathir now feel it is appropriate to urge him to carry on as Prime Minister," Zainuddin said.

In the first segment of his interview over "CNN-Talk Asia", Dr Mahathir had said he would not return to holding any political or government post after he stepped down at the end of next year as did not wish to interfere.

Zainuddin also said that talk that Dr Mahathir would follow the footsteps of former Singapore Prime Minister Datuk Lee Kuan Yew and become Senior Minister as undermining Dr Mahathir's character.

Zainuddin said Dr Mahathir is an Umno leader who had been fortunate and given the grace by Allah to be farsighted and leave his mark on the nation.

"Not many Umno leaders and Prime Ministers have had this opportunity."

"I believe the majority of Malaysians want to see Dr Mahathir leave at the height of his excellence and leadership of the nation. I am also one of them," Zainuddin said.

-- BERNAMA

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