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Mahathir-Successor

DR M GIVES WORD OF CONFIDENCE TO HIS SUCCESSOR

By: Zulkefli Salleh

BANGKOK, July 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed confidence to an international audience that his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has the capacity to push Malaysia ahead.

Less than a week after throwing open support for his successor, Dr Mahathir told a business luncheon here that his deputy had the same capacity as him to lead Malaysia successfully.

He said this when asked by a foreign journalist whether Abdullah, whom he had endorsed as his successor last week, would be able to provide the leadership of the same calibre that he had shown.

"You must understand that in Malaysia it is not the individual really, it is the policy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said since Malaysia achieved independence, it had been very consistent in her policies.

"We have never been anti-business, we have always been business-friendly. At the time when most newly independent countries were nationalising foreign holdings we went the other way, we invited more foreigners to come and help with our economy," he said.

Dr Mahathir explained that Malaysia had acquired foreign-owned estates and mines through buying them at the normal prices at the stock market.

"So, these policies are something espoused by the party (Umno) and not the individual," he said.

From the time of the first prime minister until now, Dr Mahathir said, what he had been instrumental in was "merely to give the push."

"And I'm quite sure my successor has the same capacity," he added.

Dr Mahathir, who had announced he would be stepping down in October next year, still drew the awe from his audience who fielded 11 questions ranging from international issues, his "sharp-tongue" and his secrets of staying energetic and healthy even at 76.

To a question whether he would remain vocal upon retirement, he said, as prime minister he had to be careful about what he was going to say but he would be at liberty to "lash out more nasty words" when he retires.

Giving a tip on how to stay young, Dr Mahathir said he visited work sites more often than anybody else because he liked to see things "grow" as they gave him a sense of satisfaction.

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