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Mahathir-CNN

DR MAHATHIR WILL NOT RETURN TO POLITICAL POST OR PREMIERSHIP WHEN HE
STEPS DOWN

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he will not return to his political post nor the premiership when he steps down by the end of next year as he does not want to interfere.

Prime Minister said he is absolutely positive about leaving but will continue to stay in Umno and work for the party to ensure it will continue to win in the elections and lead the government of the country.

Speaking in the first of a series of exclusive interviews with CNN-Talk Asia programme, Dr Mahathir admitted that his decision to quit was like cutting an umbilical cord.

"I think I will stay with the party, work for the party and I want to ensure the party continue to win. I will have more time to go down and meet the people."

"I will certainly be involved in politics since I am going down to explain (to the people) the whole idea of Malaysia and its politics, why it should remain democratic and how it should go about developing the country," he told CNN compere Lorraine Hahn in a 30-minute programme aired tonight.

Dr Mahathir said in the recorded interview from his official residence in Putrajaya that Malaysia will continue to grow despite his stepping down since "Malaysia has got all the things in place to continue growth, the policies and the mechanism are there."

"I think even if I am not around Malaysia can do with other people who are conversant with our policies," he said.

After 27 years of leading the country, Dr Mahathir said he will miss the job but does not think he will be missing it very much since he will be involved in party works.

On his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, he said both of them believe in the same thing and the same method of managing and developing the country, and only the styles will be different, which "is alright."

To Hahn's question of whether Malaysia needs a different style of leaders, he said: "Perhaps. I think it is good for the people to have a change."

On the legacy he will leave behind, Dr Mahathir said it is the cultural aspect rather than physical since "cultural is important."

"The fact is that I am able to maintain racial harmony between the different people" especially when he was once labelled as an ultra and very anti Chinese.

He said: "It is a challenged for me. When I was first named Deputy Prime Minister, there is a feeling of shock that I shouldn't be choosen since I was labelled as being an ultra and very anti Chinese."

"It was not a true perception...promoted by some people who wanted to get rid of me, calling me an ultra, and giving a person a label is one great way of undermining that person's influence."

He said it is politics and he accepts it.

-- BERNAMA

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