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Abdullah-Announcement

DR M WITHDRAWS DECISION AFTER APPEALS, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, June 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad retracted his decision to resign as Umno president and Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman after appeals by top party leaders who met him after making the surprise announcement.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Dr Mahathir finally changed his mind after he (Abdullah), three vice-presidents -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib -- Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Umno information chief Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob and secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob explained Umno's position that it still needed his leadership.

"We told him it is Umno's intention he leads the party and government and it was unanimous... there was no exception on the matter," said Abdullah, who is also Umno deputy president.

"Actually, we took a long time to tell Dr Mahathir the party's feelings at this time although he said he was serious about his decision.

"Finally, he understood the party's position and agreed to continue serving in the posts he was holding," he said.

Najib, Muhyiddin, Muhammad, Khalil and Megat Junid stood behind Abdullah when making the announcement which was televised live.

Abdullah hoped party members and BN component parties would be calm and understand that Dr Mahathir was still Prime Minister, Umno President, BN Chairman and held other posts.

Soon after making the surprise announcement when winding up the debate on the final day of the three-day Umno General Assembly, supreme council members and delegates spontaneously stood up and unanimously called upon Dr Mahathir to withdraw his decision.

-- BERNAMA

SR AZZ RHM TS