

26/06/2002

Leaders respect and accept PM's decision

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Expressing sadness that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will retire next year, Barisan Nasional leaders today said they none-theless respected and accepted his decision.

They also welcomed Dr Mahathir's decision not to retire abruptly, as this would allow a smooth transition to his successor administration.

The leaders, who held an hour-long meeting chaired by deputy chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Umno headquarters, also welcomed Dr Mahathir's decision to name Abdullah as his successor.

BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat, speaking on behalf of the leaders, said the BN welcomed and supported the Prime Minister's suggestion for Abdullah to be the acting Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman when the Prime Minister is on leave.

Speaking at a Press conference after the meeting, Mohamed said the BN leaders had expressed their full confidence in Abdullah as Dr Mahathir's successor as Prime Minister.

He said the BN urged its component members to accept and respect Dr Mahathir's decision to retire.

"BN members must remain united and strive to strengthen the party in facing future challenges," said Mohamed.

Abdullah, who was present at the Press conference, said the BN leaders had received a detailed explanation of the Prime Minister's decision and what had transpired at the meeting between the Umno management committee members and Dr Mahathir on Sunday.

The BN leaders were also briefed on the outcome of the earlier Umno supreme council meeting.

Abdullah said everyone at the meeting expressed sadness that the Prime Minister had decided to retire next year.

"We have to face the reality and the Prime Minister has decided when he wants to retire," he said.

Abdullah said the unanimous support given by the BN leaders had given him confidence in carrying out his duties.

He promised that in the course of carrying out his duties as the acting Prime Minister and BN chairman, he would appreciate every co-operation given by the BN leaders.

Abdullah said he believed in consulting the leaders so as to arrive at a decision collectively.

He stressed that the BN method of decision-making had resulted in the political stability of the country.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, who was the first BN leader to speak at the Press conference, said the whole country was happy that Dr Mahathir had changed his timetable for retirement.

"Dr Mahathir being the superman-Prime Minister that he is, has led the country for 21 years and there were times he was happy, there were times he was frustrated.

"The whole country is happy that he has heeded the voice of the people and agreed to change his timetable for retirement.

"MCA congratulates Datuk Seri Abdullah on his appointment as the Prime Minister's successor and hopes that at the prescribed time he smoothly and successfully takes over.

"I wish to state our undivided support to Pak Lah."

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the MIC had fully supported

Dr Mahathir for 21 years.

"Today Dr Mahathir has chosen Pak Lah to replace him when he (Dr Mahathir) retires next year.

"We fully respect Dr Mahathir's decision and pledge our full support to his successor," he said.

Sarawak Chief Minister and Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu president Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said the party would do its best to support and assist Abdullah in his work.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said the people were very grateful that Dr Mahathir had decided to stay on and lead in the transition period.

"We respect his decision to retire and thank him for all his contributions and pledge our fullest support to his successor.

"The people, meanwhile, should not engage in unwarranted speculation as there is nothing to speculate about and should instead respect the Prime Minister's wishes," he said.

SNAP president Datuk Amar James Wong Kim Min said nothing in this world lasts forever, and the people should be grateful that under Dr Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia had progressed by leaps and bounds.

"We fully support and accept the appointment of Datuk Seri Abdullah as his successor, we will render our close co-operation and assistance in the spirit of Barisan Nasional."

Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan said it was important for the country to have an orderly transition of power and Dr Mahathir's transition plan would be successful.

He said although it would be sad to see Dr Mahathir go, the reality had to be accepted that one day he would have to retire.

"We will do our best to ensure that the country will continue to succeed under the new leadership of Abdullah."

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup said he was at a loss over what to say when he heard about Dr Mahathir's resignation.

"He has changed us. In the eyes of the country and the world. We were proud when he was invited to meet Pope John Paul II. But we have to face reality. We pray that he will be in the best of health and we will help realise his plan."

Kurup added that PBRS would give Abdullah all the support he needed when he took over from Dr Mahathir.

Liberal Democratic Party president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said Dr Mahathir had on several occasions expressed his desire to retire, and his decision must be respected since he has named a worthy successor.

"We express our confidence and support for Abdullah. LDP will work to ensure an orderly transfer of power and responsibility. LDP Sabah has understood Dr Mahathir's wishes and we support them."

Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak president Datuk Amar Leo Moggie said even though it would be a sad thing to see Dr Mahathir go, he was grateful that he agreed to the supreme council members' request not to quit abruptly.

"This is so that we can have a smooth transition between himself and his successor, to whom we will give our full support."

Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee said: "We thank the Prime Minister for having tirelessly served us for the past 21 years. He was one leader who always had the interest of the people and the country at heart.

"He has now decided to retire and, though we feel sad, we respect his decision. We also pledge our full support for his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi."

People's Progressive Party president Datuk M. Kavyeas said: "We are

thankful that Dr Mahathir has agreed to lead the nation for a further 15 months.

"The Prime Minister has made our country proud, has done many things and saved our country from many tough times.

"We hope that Malaysians will not make comparisons and make it difficult for his successor... they have to understand the situation and see that the country continues to prosper."

United Pasokmomogun Kadazan-dusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) president Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said his party had no choice but to accept the Prime Minister's decision.

"We also support his succession plan as announced by Pak Lah today. We hereby pledge our continued full support in the spirit of Barisan Nasional and for the continued development of Malaysia," he added.

Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP) president Tan Sri Dr George Chan said Dr Mahathir was a very considerate man who had put his personal desires aside so that the country would remain stable.

"We respect his decision to retire and we are sure that Pak Lah will be able to take over effectively and we hereby pledge our full support in the true spirit of Barisan Nasional."