

26/06/2002

Musa: Ensure a smooth transition

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam said today Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should be given the support to manage the shift to the top post and carry out his responsibilities.

"It's important that stability and calm prevail during this transition period. I think if Umno knows what's good for it, everyone at the different levels of leadership will give him support," he said.

Musa noted that the top leadership of Umno had already come out in clear support of this arrangement to ensure the transition period will be smooth for Abdullah.

"What remains is for this to be translated into reality."

Musa said the "best retirement present" to give to Dr Mahathir was a united and stable Umno that would continue to lead the Government and country.

He added he was glad a compromise was struck with Dr Mahathir who wanted to retire immediately.

"I am glad we have reached such a compromise and sacrifice by Dr Mahathir."

He added that he had never doubted that the Prime Minister was serious when he announced his resignation.

On Abdullah's successor, Musa said the country had gone through this "intricate exercise" many times and there was no need to hurry into a decision.

Institute of Strategic and International Studies chairman Tan Sri Noordin Sopiee said in many ways, Dr Mahathir had been the greatest Malay leader of the last 500 years.

"It will be very difficult for anyone to fill his shoes."

However, Noordin said Malaysians were fortunate their next Prime Minister would be a man of integrity and character, competence, moderation and common sense.

"I am confident that Pak Lah will surprise everyone," he said.

Noordin said Malaysia was fortunate in that its institutions were strong and well established.

"We now have a clear line of succession. The transition will be smooth and stable."

Social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said the announcement has helped to clear the air.

"The statement is necessary to put to an end all forms of speculation concerning Dr Mahathir's resignation."

Lee said the nation was relieved by the statement and the people have a better idea of what was to come in the months ahead, including a smooth transition of leadership.

"Although Malaysians have reason to feel a sense of loss, they have to respect the wishes of the Prime Minister and prepare themselves for a change of stewardship after October next year."

He said Dr Mahathir would certainly be remembered for all his past accomplishments and contributions to the nation when he steps down officially.

In the meantime, he added, what was needed was for continued unity and political stability for the nation.

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