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National leaders express relief over decision

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NATIONAL leaders heaved a collective sigh of relief that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has withdrawn his resignation as Umno president and Barisan National chairman.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said Dr Mahathir's leadership was still very much needed for many more years.

"Thank God, thank God.

"I'm sure the whole country is relieved now," he said.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said he was very happy the Prime Minister had changed his mind.

"We need him.

"His leadership will bring us many years of progress, stability and unity in our nation," he said.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said he was "totally shocked" at the earlier announcement but was relieved the PM had agreed to stay on as Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman.

"The country still needs him.

"We in Gerakan support him one hundred per cent and I hope all problems will be overcome," he said.

People's Progressive Party president Datuk M. Kayveas, said the earlier announcement had shocked him.

"People are not going to forget the shockwaves of Dr Mahathir's announcement.

"It is not time for him to step down.

"He needs to be around," he said.

MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek said God had answered the prayers of many that Dr Mahathir should reconsider his decision to step down.

He said initially when he heard the announcement, he prayed that Dr Mahathir would reconsider.

In Kota Kinabalu, leaders of Barisan Nasional component parties in Sabah echoed similar views.

Chief Minister and Sabah BN chairman Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said it was definitely a relief to all Malaysians that Dr Mahathir retracted his decision to resign.

"The nation needs him," said Chong, who is also Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president.

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup said it was not an appropriate time for Dr Mahathir to retire because his leadership was still very much needed by the nation.

Congratulating the Umno supreme council for succeeding in persuading the Prime Minister to stay on, Kurup said Dr Mahathir is Malaysia's pillar in facing the many challenges ahead.

Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) deputy president Datuk Tham Nyip Shen it was a great relief that Dr Mahathir retracted his decision because it had caught the people unprepared.

"The nation must be prepared for his retirement," said Tham, who is also Sabah Deputy Chief Minister.

Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) deputy president Dr Maximus Ongkili said it was not time yet for Dr Mahathir to retire and it was a big relief to all that he had withdrawn his decision.

In Penang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon welcomed Dr Mahathir's decision to continue leading the country.

Koh said he was very relieved to hear Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's announcement that Dr Mahathir had agreed to stay on.

"I felt numb and did not know what to do, and then sent an SMS through one of Dr Mahathir's family member's handphone pleading for him to continue leading the country," added Koh.

In Kuala Terengganu, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said the announcement by Dr Mahathir and the subsequent developments was Umno's internal matter.

He said the announcement had caught everyone in the audience including Umno senior leaders by surprise.

DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock described the turn of events in Umno and of Dr Mahathir yesterday as dramatic and "shocking".

"I know Dr Mahathir is seen as a tough leader or a 'warrior PM' and he would not make an announcement like that.

"He earlier seemed to be willing to embark on a new campaign for the improvement of the Malays, and this event certainly stole the news for today," he said.

In Alor Star, Dr Mahathir's elder sister, Habsah Mohamad - who is bed-ridden and admitted to a private hospital here suffering from age-related illness, was shocked to hear the news.

Her daughter, Kalsom Abdul Ghani, said doctors had to attend to her mother immediately after Habsah heard the announcement over television.

Kalsom said doctors and nurses immediately attended to her mother to ensure the shock was not too much for her to bear.

Kalsom said her mother's condition had stabilised.

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