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Abdullah-Touched

ABDULLAH TOUCHED BY SUPPORT FROM UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he is touched by the strong support from Umno supreme council members for him to take over as prime minister as Umno president as wished for by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir would continue to serve as the prime minister, Umno president and Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman during the transition period from now until October next year.

"I am most touched by the support given by the supreme council to what Dr Mahathir wished for, and during the period that has been decided, there will be an orderly transfer of power," he told a media conference after chairing a special meeting of the supreme council.

Abdullah said he would continue with his normal duties as deputy prime minister, and in addition perform the duties of the prime minister in the absence of Dr Mahathir.

Asked if he is currently the acting prime minister as Dr Mahathir is away in Italy on a short holiday, Abdullah said Dr Mahathir had technically passed over to him the responsibility of making all necessary decisions.

He added that he would be officially appointed as acting prime minister when Dr Mahathir goes on a long holiday.

Abdullah said he did not at this time wish to come out with any new policy or decision, and would discharge his duties well without creating any doubts for Dr Mahathir.

"While he is on holiday, he will know what is happening in the country and the government," he said.

Abdullah said that during the transition period, Dr Mahathir's work efficiency and status would be upheld and everyone would abide by him.

"It does not mean that during this period, I wish to outshine him and show that I am better than him...the prime minister's presence must be respected and that's the wish of all of us at today's meeting," he said.

Asked about the Umno elections scheduled for next year, Abdullah said the matter was not discussed at today's meeting.

He said decisions on the matter would be made by the supreme council and Dr Mahathir himself.

"When any decision (on party elections) is made, today's decision will be taken into account," he added.

On the possibility of power jostling among party leaders, especially the vice-presidents, next year, Abdullah said he was confident that unity would prevail in the party.

"If anyone thinks there will be confusion and squabbles after Dr Mahathir resigns, it will not take place considering the spirit shown at today's meeting," he said.

Abdullah said he was also touched by the support given to him as Dr Mahathir's successor by the heads of the Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties.

The deputy prime minister said everyone felt that Dr Mahathir would retire, but the reality was that the prime minister would certainly have to retire one day.

"I promise that whenever I am asked to be acting (prime minister), I will appreciate whatever cooperation by the leaders of the other component parties.

"We will emphasise on the benefit of consensus, and make decisions

unanimously," he said.

Abdullah said the role of making decisions unanimously that had been practised by the BN all this years would result in greater confidence in the country's political stability.

-- BERNAMA

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