

25 JUN 2002

Mahathir-VPs

UMNO VPs ACCEPT DR M'S RESIGNATION, SUPPORT ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25 (Bernama) -- The three Umno vice-presidents said today they abided by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to resign and supported Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his chosen successor in government and the party.

They also pledged full support to Abdullah to take over the leadership of the government and party after October 2003.

The special supreme council meeting today discussed Dr Mahathir's decision to relinquish all posts in the government and the party which would be effective after the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in October next year.

Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob announced that Dr Mahathir would quit from all posts in the government and Umno in October 2003.

Speaking at a media conference after the supreme council meeting, party vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said he accepted and respected Dr Mahathir's decision to give up the posts as the Prime Minister had given a serious thought to it.

He said Dr Mahathir had made the decision on his own free will without being pressured by anyone and feeling slighted over anything.

"Since he has made the decision in all sincerity, I personally respected his decision and hold in high esteem whatever he has done all this while to turn Malaysia into a very successful nation.

"I also appreciate that, firstly, he has ensured a smooth and orderly transition and secondly, he has allayed uncertainties by naming his successor Abdullah (Ahmad) Badawi as Prime Minister and party president.

"I personally support Abdullah to take over the posts and I'll give full cooperation to him," he said.

Najib said he along with the other two vice-presidents and supreme council members at all levels would see through Dr Mahathir's wish to ensure the country and party continue to remain stable.

"It is my personal wish to ensure the prevailing stability will be maintained and our country and party will continue to succeed in our struggles," he said.

Another vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin also expressed his full support to the power transition plan announced.

"We need to acknowledge Dr Mahathir's immense contributions to the country and party and respect his sacrifices. We should also respect his decision and stand," he said.

He said the power transition proposed by Dr Mahathir provided relief not only to Umno but also to all Malaysians.

"The plan safeguarded the country's interests and does not affect the continuity enjoyed all this while. I wished to give my endorsement to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to take over the country's leadership and this will erase all doubts," he said.

Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, another vice-president, felt that Malaysia had lost an extraordinary leader on his own accord.

He said the proposed transition was an accurate answer in a situation like this as the continuity in the country's leadership was guaranteed and known to the people.

"This will put a stop to initial speculations and we promise to continue working as usual to face new challenges," he said.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the movement

respected and abided by Dr Mahathir's decision to resign from government and party posts.

"The support will be continued during the transition period. We also promise to provide undivided support to Abdullah Badawi as Dr Mahathir's successor," he said.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said she really valued Dr Mahathir's concern to consider appeals by supreme council members and the people to retract his resignation announced on Saturday.

His concern was clear when Dr Mahathir said he placed party interests above himself and his family and gave a timeframe during which a smooth and orderly transition of power would take place with Abdullah take over as his successor, she said.

She said there was no reason whatsoever for anybody to make speculations.

"More importantly, we can see a smooth shift in policies during Dr Mahathir's era to Abdullah after the transition of power.

"This is very important because the various races in Malaysia not only want to see a good leadership but also continuity of good policies and fine-tuned later," he said.

Rafidah said she and Wanita Umno would give strong support to Dr Mahathir while he was still the Prime Minister and to Abdullah after he took over the leadership of the government and party.

"I wish to urge groups from within and outside the country not to make any speculation on the reasons for Dr Mahathir's resignation.

"It's only that he feels he has been too long holding the positions. We asked him to withdraw, he has withdrawn but has given a timeframe," he said.

She hoped everybody would continue to preserve peace and order in the country, further strengthen the party and its status quo and ensure a smooth transition of power.

Speaking to reporters after the press conference, Rafidah rejected claims by certain quarters that she cannot work with Abdullah.

She said she could work with anyone with good intentions.

She believed Abdullah would be a visionary just like Dr Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA

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