

25 JUN 2002

Mahathir-Reaction (Umno)

STATE UMNO LIAISON BODIES SUPPORT MT DECISION

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25 (Bernama) -- All the State Umno Liaison Bodies today expressed their appreciation to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his decision to retire from all posts after the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting next year.

They also gave their full support to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to carry out the functions of acting party president at certain times during the transition period.

Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad, representing all the chairmen of the state Umno liaison bodies, said "there will certainly be no doubt" during the transition of power.

He said all chairmen of the state Umno liaison bodies would immediately carry out their tasks in briefing and giving clarification to party members at all levels to ensure there was no confusion over the matter.

Speaking at a media conference together with the chairmen of the state Umno liaison bodies, Mohamed Isa said the decision was reached at a special meeting of the chairmen of state Umno liaison bodies held before the Umno Supreme Council meeting today.

Those present were Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain (Kedah), Datuk Seri Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali (Perak), Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo (Selangor), Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman (Johor), Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob (Pahang) and Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam (Melaka).

Meanwhile, Puteri Umno protem head Azalina Osman Said said the movement accepted the decision taken and would cooperate to ensure that the change in the national leadership went smoothly.

"As party members we take instruction very well and what have been decided is for the good of the party," she said.

However, she said the main focus of the party now was the coming by-election in Kedah, saying there was not much time.

The by-elections for the Anak Bukit State Assembly seat and the Pendang parliamentary seat are being held following the death of the representative for both seats, Datuk Fadzil Noor, who was also PAS president, on Sunday.

Gua Musang Umno division head Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah felt sad over Dr Mahathir's decision to step down but personally respected the decision after the Prime Minister had contributed much and served the country for so long.

He said the community would certainly feel the loss as Dr Mahathir had led the country for 21 years, but they must accept the reality of his resignation.

"The fact is that one day people will have to stop working, we love him, (we) want him to continue to work but he has made a decision, it is a sacrifice.

"If he still remains, then there is the question of credibility because he had announced that he intended to step down," he said, denying the question that Dr Mahathir wanted to appoint him to hold a certain post.

He said Dr Mahathir was also willing to entertain the request of the delegates at the recent Umno General Assembly to continue to assume his post which was considered as a sacrifice for the people.

Meanwhile, Umno information chief Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said Dr Mahathir's decision to retire was because he was certain that Abdullah, who had been his deputy for four years, was "already well prepared" to take

over the country's leadership.

In addition, as grandfather to 15 grandchildren, Dr Mahathir also needed time to be with his family, besides carrying out religious deeds and write books, he said.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid said Abdullah's appointment as successor to Dr Mahathir was agreed upon unanimously by all members of the Supreme Council (MT).

He said every MT member was given the chance to state their stand on the power transition and unanimously supported it and stated their confidence in Abdullah's leadership.

Asked whether Umno members would accept the decision, Azmi said: "In Umno, when the leadership had accepted a decision, party members at the grassroots would be able to accept it too."

Kelantan Umno Liaison head Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said he felt relieved because the transition of power in the country went smoothly and in an orderly manner and this would greatly help the efforts of Kelantan Umno in wresting the state government from PAS in the next general election.

"What is important is that there is continuity in the policies of the party which had been mutually agreed upon," he said.

Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Ali Rustam said Dr Mahathir himself had named Abdullah as his successor to lead Umno and the government and everyone should respect that decision.

He was convinced that Umno members and the rakyat generally would continue to give their support to Abdullah to take over from Dr Mahathir.

MT member Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis said the transition proved that Dr Mahathir placed the wellbeing of the party and country above personal interest.

He said this also proved that there was political maturity in Malaysia with the power transition taking place peacefully compared with chaos that occurred in some other countries.

MT member Datuk Dr Yusof Noor said every party member should accept and respect Dr Mahathir's intention to retire from party and government posts.

Selangor Umno Liaison Chief Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo said Abdullah's appointment as the next Prime Minister gave a clear picture on the transition of power in the country's leadership.

"It is hoped that this will not lead to economic crisis and instability in the country in future but gives strength to the government to continue to develop the country," he added.

-- BERNAMA

AKT RZS AHH AO