

03 MAR 2003

Mahathir-Leave

DR M ON TWO-MONTH LEAVE FROM THURSDAY, ABDULLAH ACTING PM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be on two-month leave from Thursday till May 4.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will be the acting Prime Minister and Finance Minister during the period, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement today.

Before starting his leave, Dr Mahathir would attend the two-day Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Emergency Meeting in Doha, Qatar beginning tomorrow.

"While Dr Mahathir is on leave, Abdullah will be the acting Prime Minister and Finance Minister," said the two-paragraph statement.

The statement also said the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Putra Jamalullail had been notified that Abdullah was the acting Prime Minister.

During his leave, Dr Mahathir would make working visits to Brazil and Jeddah.

On June 22 last year, Dr Mahathir made a surprise announcement at the end of the Umno General Assembly that he wanted to resign from all posts in the government and party but agreed to retract his decision on certain conditions.

Dr Mahathir announced later that he would retire after the OIC Summit in October. Malaysia is the incoming OIC Chairman.

He named Abdullah as his successor.

Dr Mahathir, in an interview with CNBC TV in January, said he agreed to stay on as Prime Minister on two conditions -- that he be allowed to retire after the OIC Summit and be given two-month leave after the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.

The 13th NAM Summit was held from Feb 20 to 25.

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