

01 NOV 2003

Abdullah-Success (Round-up)

BN MUST WORK HARD TO CONTINUE DR MAHATHIR'S SUCCESS, SAYS ABDULLAH

PENANG, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today urged Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders and members to enhance cooperation among themselves and work hard to ensure a big win in the coming general election.

He said only a major victory by the BN in the coming general election could ensure that all the successes achieved through policies carried out under the leadership of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad could be continued.

In his maiden speech as the new Prime Minister in front of about 30,000 people who had gathered for his homecoming at the Bayan Lepas International Airport here, Abdullah did not announce any new policy and instead stressed on the need for the people to continue supporting the BN policies drawn up under Dr Mahathir.

He said that having served as Umno deputy president and BN deputy chairman, he knew the policies planned by Dr Mahathir who had brought much development to the country throughout his 22 years at the helm.

He said that all policies drawn up by the BN government under Dr Mahathir were made through consensus among the BN component parties.

"The policies could be successfully implemented as all the party (BN) machinery and the rakyat gave their support to enable the country to continue charting its progress," he said.

Abdullah said the support had also given BN the strength to form the government with a two-third majority.

As such, he said, BN members must work harder to face the next general election for a bigger victory compared to the one in 1999.

"This is my aspiration. I'm not asking you to work for me, but (you) must work together with me for the people, religion and country," he said.

He said no leader could succeed without strong support from party members, friends and the community.

He also urged all BN members to ensure that BN continued to progress and succeed and to give excellent service to the people always.

"We strongly uphold the principle of hard work among the races and power sharing in the government. We also emphasise on consensus and cooperation in discharging our responsibilities," he said.

Also present at the welcoming ceremony were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Information Minister and Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali.

Abdullah said he was thankful for inheriting such an effective and successful government as well as the most developed among the developing countries due to the leadership Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, in his speech at a gathering to welcome him in Kepala Batas later, Abdullah said his appointment as successor to Dr Mahathir was not an honour for himself or his family.

On the contrary, he said, the appointment was more a responsibility entrusted to him to ensure the continued development of the people and country.

He said the trust must be preserved properly and he called on the cooperation of everyone to ensure that he could carry out his responsibility effectively.

Abdullah, who is also MP for the constituency, said he prayed for good health and guidance from Allah to discharge his responsibility in the best possible manner.

"I appeal for your cooperation in praying for my good health and that I would get guidance at all time for the good of all the ethnic groups in this country," said Abdullah who took the oath of office yesterday to succeed Dr Mahathir who retired after 22 years at the helm of the government. Abdullah also thanked Dr Mahathir for giving him the trust and naming him as successor.

Abdullah's return to the state where he was born, after the swearing-in in front of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara yesterday, was also greeted with a warm welcome by leaders and members of BN component parties, private sector representatives and workers, school and college students as well as other members of the public.

Members of the BN component parties carried various banners, including "Towards a New Era With YAB Pak Lah", "Pak Lah, the Son of Penang Whom We Are All Proud Of and Love", and "Congratulations Pak Lah, You Always Have Our Solid Support".

Thousands of people were also on hand to welcome him in Kepala Batas to meet his mother, Datuk Kailan Hassan, at his family home in Jalan Perak, to get her blessing on his appointment as Prime Minister.

Abdullah was driven in a car from the airport escorted by a convoy of hundreds of superbikes passing through Jalan Tun Dr Awang heading towards Bulatan Bayan Baru and Lebuhraya Bayan Lepas and the Penang Bridge.

The Prime Minister's entourage was later joined by hundreds more riders on superbikes who were waiting at the Penang Bridge Toll Plaza, travelling towards Kepala Batas, where an elaborate welcoming ceremony had also been prepared.

About 10,000 people had lined up along the approximately three-kilometre route from the Bertam Toll Plaza, North-South Highway near here to the town to welcome the Prime Minister who was escorted by a motorcycle convoy from Bayan Lepas International Airport.

Although there was a heavy downpour when he was delivering his speech, the thousands of people who had gathered to welcome him stayed in the rain to listen to his speech.

To the people of Kepala Batas whom he had represented since 1978, he pledged to continue to develop the constituency as the place had become the starting point in his political career.

After the speech, he proceeded to visit his mother whose house was located nearby and broke fast with his relatives.

He later performed the Isyak and tarawih prayers at the Masjid Jamek Jamiul Badawi across the road from his mother's house.

-- BERNAMA

SA AA ZU NH ZS