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Lim-Resign

CABINET MUST RESIGN WITH DR MAHATHIR, SAYS KENG YAIK

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- The entire cabinet must resign when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad leaves office in October in line with established parliamentary processes and practices, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said today.

"We will help Dr Mahathir prepare the country for a smooth transition of power but as a symbolic gesture and in line with established parliamentary principles, all cabinet ministers must also submit their resignation.

"It is then up to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (who will succeed Dr Mahathir as prime minister) to reappoint or make new appointments to the cabinet," he told reporters at the Gerakan Chinese New Year open house.

The open house was attended by Dr Mahathir, his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Abdullah, cabinet ministers, members of the diplomatic corps and over 5,000 well-wishers from all walks of life.

Dr Lim, who is Primary Industries Minister, said the resignation of all cabinet ministers would give Abdullah a free hand to choose his own line-up to sit in the country's highest decision-making body.

"As the new Prime Minister, Pak Lah (Abdullah) should have the power to decide on who he wants to appoint...even with the Barisan Nasional (BN) consultative process, the ultimate power to appoint a minister lies with him," he said.

He said if Abdullah wants to retain the present cabinet, he should reappoint all the ministers after they had resigned and a swearing-in ceremony must be held soon after.

"It is purely a parliamentary practice and process. It is not something new. It has been practised before. The resignations are to give Pak Lah a new mandate," he said.

Dr Mahathir at the Umno General Assembly in June last year dropped a bombshell when he announced his retirement with immediate effect but was persuaded by other party leaders, led by Abdullah, to stay on till October.

The Prime Minister had on several occasions said that Abdullah would take over the reins of Umno and the government after his retirement.

Touching on racial unity in Malaysia, Dr Lim said festive celebrations like the Chinese New Year should be used to forge closer race relations.

"We need the unity among the various races in the country as we live in a multi-racial nation and one race alone cannot succeed in bringing peace and prosperity to the people," he said.

He said the country went through turbulence last year, be it in economic or politics, and hoped that the Year of the Ram would bring more calm to the people to face the challenges of the future.

On world peace, he said, the Americans should discard their "saber-rattling" attitude as the world believed that peace was the best way to settle problems or differences that might arise.

On Singapore, he said, leaders of both countries should realise that words, which could incite aggression on either side, must not be uttered in public.

"We cannot anymore take each other for granted. I hope politicians of both sides will stop their saber-rattling attitude and start becoming good neighbours once again," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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