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Mahathir-Abdullah

DR MAHATHIR: ABDULLAH IS SUITABLE TO TAKE OVER THE COUNTRY'S
PREMIERSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, June 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, is suitable to take over as prime minister when he steps down in October this year.

He said he had confidence in Abdullah to carry on the country's policies.

"I think he is very suitable to take over," he said when asked by an Abu Dhabi TV station reporter at the Parliament lobby here whether he is confident of Abdullah taking over the leadership of the country when he retires.

Dr Mahathir said: "We have worked together for a long time. We know each other very well, and I have no problem working with him."

On whether he was worried that the new government would change the current policies after he retired, he said that Malaysia had been practising collective decision-making through the Cabinet and "I have no worries about that."

"We belong to a single party and the policy of the party remains even though the leaders of the party change.

"The decisions are made by the Cabinet and everybody is bound by the Cabinet. It is not (the decision of the) prime minister alone," he said.

"If the prime minister comes up with an idea but the Cabinet does not agree, the idea cannot go through.

"This is an entrenched policy of the government, and the way the government handles any situation is determined by the Cabinet," he said.

Replying to questions from local reporters on the tabling of the Federal Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2003, 2003, Dr Mahathir said that the government's aim in increasing the parliamentary seats by 25 to make a total of 219 was to ensure that the people received adequate representation.

It was not to ensure more votes for the Barisan Nasional in the general election, he said.

"We can win even without increasing (the number of seats). In 1999, there was no addition but we won three quarters of the (parliamentary) seats," he said.

So, the redelineation of parliamentary constituencies was not about increasing the seats to win, he said.

"If there's one representative, there are too many people so they don't get a hearing," he said.

Asked whether the present Dewan Rakyat chamber needed to be relocated or extended to accommodate the increase in the number of MPs, he said the government had no such plans.

He said that even in the House of Commons, London, the number of seats was much less than the number of parliamentarians.

"You come early, you get a seat, you come late you don't get a seat.

"Especially when they have joint sitting between the Senate and the parliamentarians, they have to sit on the ground," he said.

The Dewan Rakyat chamber currently has 194 seats which are already so packed that adding 25 more seats will make it even more crammed.

-- BERNAMA

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