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Abdullah-Thankful

ABDULLAH THANKFUL FOR INHERITING EFFECTIVE GOV'T FROM DR MAHATHIR

PENANG, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- The new Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, said today he is thankful for inheriting such an effective and successful government as well as the most developed among the developing countries due to the leadership of his predecessor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In his maiden speech at the Bayan Lepas airport here, in conjunction with his return to the state, he said the success was due to the efforts and contributions of Dr Mahathir during his 22-year tenure as Prime Minister.

Abdullah, who was accompanied by Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, was earlier given a rousing welcome by thousands of people including members of Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties upon arrival at the airport's old terminal.

The former Deputy Prime Minister was sworn in as Prime Minister in front of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara yesterday, succeeding Dr Mahathir who had opted to retire.

Abdullah said that having served as Umno deputy president and BN deputy chairman, he knew the policies planned by Dr Mahathir.

"All the policies were drawn up through consensus. They are actually our joint policies.

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.

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 and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain.

Abdullah thanked the people for giving him their support, saying that no leader could succeed without strong support from party members, friends and the community.

He said he now had heavier task and responsibility that demanded more time and effort, not only duties within the country but also abroad.

He believed that the support given to him by party members and the people were not based in his private capacity but as BN chairman.

"You support me not because I am Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi, but because I lead a cause, namely the Umno and Barisan Nasional cause," he said.

Based on this premise, he hoped everyone would continue to give their support to him to continue to lead the BN to carry out its tasks and responsibility and implement the country's development policies.

Recalling his political struggles, Abdullah said it had started long before he became the member of Parliament for Kepala Batas in 1978, as he had joined Umno in 1965.

"I have served Umno for a long time, later I got promoted. It was tough, I was thrown out, then came back, (I went) up and down, eventually I reached the final stage. I thank the people of Penang," he said.

He also urged all BN members to ensure that BN continued to progress

and succeed and to give excellent service to the people always.

He also hoped that Penang and all the other states in the country would achieve greater development.

-- BERNAMA

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