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Abdullah-PM

ABDULLAH READY TO TAKE ON RESPONSIBILITIES AS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi reiterated today that he is ready to take on the responsibilities as Malaysia's fifth prime minister.

The deputy prime minister said he was ready to face all the challenges and problems, both within and outside the country, because the challenges would always be there.

"I've gone to many places in the past few months and everyone has expressed support and willingness to work with me," he told a media conference after opening the 22nd annual general meeting of the Malaysian Federation of Hokkien Associations here.

He was asked whether he was ready to take on the job when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad steps down as prime minister on Friday.

Abdullah called on all the people, irrespective of their race or religion, to work together to foster unity to maintain the progress that the country had achieved so far.

"Actually, even if we're clever, hardworking and have the knowledge, we're helpless if the country is not safe and in chaos...that's why I'm stressing the importance of ensuring that our country is peaceful and safe," he said.

On the delay in getting allocations to pay contractors involved in flood mitigation projects in Penang and Kedah, Abdullah directed the Agriculture Ministry to act immediately to resolve the problem.

He said the ministry, which was responsible for the projects, should speak with the treasury so that the works could proceed smoothly and the projects completed quickly.

Otherwise, there would be no end to the people's flood problems, he added.

Earlier, in his speech, Abdullah said that compared with the people of some countries, Malaysians should be thankful for the peace that they enjoyed and he hoped that no one would cause any trouble to destroy the racial unity in the country.

"The government cannot accept any form of extremism, be it racial, religious or political...because extremism brings about tension in our society," he said.

He also thanked Dr Mahathir for turning Malaysia into a country that is developed in all fields to the extent that it has won international recognition.

"Surely we want to thank this leader of ours who has succeeded in leading the people until they are confident of facing the future," he said.

President of the Malaysian Federation of Hokkien Associations Datuk Tong Yoke Kim, in his speech, said the Hokkien community in the country gave its undivided support to Abdullah as the prospective prime minister.

"We are confident that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will succeed in leading all the people to ensure continued development," he said.

However, the people would not forget Dr Mahathir who had done so much for the nation, he said.

"Under Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership, Malaysia had achieved outstanding and commendable success," he added.

-- BERNAMA

SSA KHY JK

