

10 MAY 2003

S'pore-Musa

FORMER DPM'S ADVICE TO PAK LAH: BE YOURSELF

SINGAPORE, May 10 (Bernama) -- Former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam has described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a tough act for anyone to follow, and advised his (Dr Mahathir's) successor to be himself.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should give up any attempt to emulate Dr Mahathir and just be himself, said Musa in an interview with Today newspaper at his office in Kuala Lumpur.

At the MIC's 57th annual general assembly in Kuala Lumpur today, Dr Mahathir has reaffirmed his decision to step down as Prime Minister in October and will not lead the Barisan Nasional in the next general election.

"Dr Mahathir was literally a one-man show -- he had ideas, he pushed them ...he implemented ideas, and his Cabinet colleagues as well as the whole system were following him and doing what he created," said Musa.

"Badawi (Abdullah) cannot be the same personality or leader. So, what Badawi will need will be a good back-up team, a much more creative team," said Musa.

According to Today, the turmoil caused by terrorism and international political developments will test Abdullah's resolve in managing crises, but Musa is optimistic: "It's going to be quite challenging but I think he will do it."

The newspaper said Musa, who was DPM from 1981 to 1986, resigned after several years of bitter disputes with Dr Mahathir over issues such as political appointments.

It added that at the time, Musa said he was resigning because Dr Mahathir no longer trusted him.

"I know that I've had my differences with him and I don't think I could have followed his act," said Musa, adding that he had never regretted the split.

Since he left the post, Musa has served in a number of distinguished positions for the Malaysian government, his most recent being the first chair of Malaysia's Human Rights Commission.

-- BERNAMA

SS MFJ RM