

28 JUL 2003

Mahathir-Resign

DR M REITERATES DECISION TO STEP DOWN

PETALING JAYA, July 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated that he would be stepping down as the country's leader as planned.

Responding to a request at the 7th World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention that he continues to lead the country, he said he was flattered that people wanted him to continue.

"I have made the announcement that I would step down. If I don't step down, I will lose my credibility and if I lose my credibility, I will be useless to anyone," he said.

As to whether he would be able to participate and lend support to Asian leaders after leaving office, he said he could not make directives when he was no longer the prime minister.

As to whether he could still give advice on how to help Asia bring about justice and dignity, he said, "If you need me to talk, I will talk until I am blue in the face. If you need my advice on Asia and peace, then I am happy to talk and ponder about it. That's all I can do."

However, he said he hoped to be able to continue his friendship with Asian leaders then.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir who officiated the event here today was earlier given a rousing welcome by over 3,000 delegates to the convention which saw an active question and answer session with the Prime Minister.

Touching on the question of health, he said the world was now facing the problem on health due to the speed of travel.

He said people travelled, carried and spread diseases as had happened during the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak.

He said the disease took a longer time to incubate and one did not show the symptoms immediately.

"As such, there is a need to look at diseases differently. Because of the speed of travel, quarantine does not work like it used to be."

"Now you can reach a destination and show the symptoms but cannot quarantine the person," he said.

Besides that, doctors and medical staff were also now exposed to new diseases.

Faced with new diseases in the future, he urged that more research should also be done in traditional/herbal medicine to cure these diseases.

When asked on the big warning signs over drug trafficking at entry points which could be a deterrent or scare away investors, he said: "We don't want to be unfair to people by not telling them how serious the crime is."

He said if there was no trafficking, then there was nothing to fear.

"It is not a deterrent. But I leave it to the new Prime Minister to make any decision. I will not do something that would create a problem to him," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SHO HM AO