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PM-Tributes

POLITICIANS, NGOs PAY TRIBUTE TO DR MAHATHIR AND ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- Malaysian politicians and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) continued to pay tribute to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad while welcoming Malaysia's fifth prime minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) president Prof Datuk Hamdan Adnan told Bernama that Dr Mahathir's retirement today disproved foreign claims that he was a dictator.

"It is the mark of a great man to resign at the peak of glory, at the top and when he is very popular," he said.

"It reflects his total commitment to the well-being of the country. No dictator would step down if he was thinking of his own interests and not the nation's well-being."

Hamdan also pointed to three institutions founded during Dr Mahathir's 22 years as prime minister which refuted foreign claims that he did not respect human rights. They are the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry, the Women and Family Development Ministry and the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam), of which Hamdan is a commissioner.

"With all these institutions in place, he can take a well-deserved rest," said Hamdan.

Dr Mahathir could also retire knowing he had a competent successor and his Vision could be realised "100 per cent", the Suhakam commissioner said.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said in a press statement today that considerable changes of Dr Mahathir's leadership had been felt by all levels of society, in the towns and in the rural areas, from small traders to international-class entrepreneurs, from fishermen and rubber tappers to hill farmers in Sabah and Sarawak.

Dompok, who is president of the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko), said the party values the contributions, support and motivation given by Dr Mahathir which encouraged them to continue the struggle for national development with other component parties in the Barisan Nasional.

At the recent Upko congress, he noted, Dr Mahathir had given his blessings and acknowledgement that Upko represent the Kadazandusun and Murut in Sabah and would always be represented within the Federal Cabinet.

"We can only express our unlimited thanks and appreciation for his contributions for 22 years while leading the Malaysian Government and the Barisan Nasional," the Minister said.

Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister is also a leader of calibre, he said, capable of leading the country well and ensuring an excellent future through a smooth and harmonious transition of power.

Malaysian Youth Council secretary-general Norizan Sharif said the NGO, which represents 10 million young Malaysians, records its appreciation and thanks to Dr Mahathir, who had introduced the education policy which shaped their generation.

"He made the people of this country believe in the country's capabilities and ability to compete," he said.

The Council believes Abdullah will continue the sterling development pioneered by Dr Mahathir and earlier prime ministers.

As an activist with the youth movement, the Council believes Abdullah will give priority to the youth who are an asset to national development.

The Council also believes Abdullah will continue to give opportunities

to the younger generation to be involved in national development at different levels.

"The Council believes Datuk Seri Abdullah's readiness and openness to hear the opinions of all parties, including the youth, will enable the younger generation to continue being involved in development in a more meaningful way," Norizan said.

Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur Murphy Pakiam said the Catholic Church prayed that God would bless Abdullah with "strength, wisdom and good health in administering the nation in the face of various challenges."

Pakiam, who is also the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, said they hoped the friendliness and goodwill that exist among the various races and religions in the country will be further enhanced.

They pledged their support to Abdullah to promote justice, peace and harmony for the well-being of all Malaysians.

The Administrative and Diplomatic Service Association Malaysia (PPTD) also congratulated Abdullah.

PPTD president Datuk Seri Aseh Che Mat said: "As an association of senior government officers, we pledge to fully support the country's administration under the leadership of the Right Honourable Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in the interest of the nation's progress as well as its economic and social stability."

Aseh said that the association was particularly proud because for the first time in Malaysia's 46-year history, the post of prime minister is held by a former administrative and diplomatic service (PTD) officer.

PPTD also placed on record their greatest appreciation for Dr Mahathir's guidance and support for the PTD officers.

Parti Keadilan Rakyat also joined well-wishers in congratulating Abdullah on his appointment as Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister.

Its president, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and deputy president, Dr Syed Husin Ali said Abdullah would face many challenges.

They hoped that Abdullah would tackle the challenges in a democratic manner in the name of justice, truth and equality.

Dr Azizah and Dr Syed Husin also hoped that Abdullah would uphold the principles of justice.

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