

31 OCT 2003

Abdullah-Power

ABDULLAH ASSUMES POWER AS FIFTH PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad this afternoon officially handed over the leadership of the Federal Government to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The historic transfer of power ceremony was held at the Prime Minister's Office on the Fifth Floor of the green-domed Bangunan Perdana Putra in Putrajaya which is the seat of the Federal Government.

Abdullah who will be 64 next month was earlier sworn-in as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail at Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur.

At the ceremony, Dr Mahathir handed over the desk file to signify the transfer of responsibilities of the high office to Abdullah in the presence of the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman.

Following this Abdullah had a closed door meeting with Dr Mahathir.

Outside, Cabinet Ministers, senior government officers and scores of ministry staff and hundreds of Putrajaya residents waited to bid farewell to Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah, who was born on Nov 26, 1939, in Kepala Betas, Penang, was appointed Deputy Prime Minister by Dr Mahathir on Jan 8, 1999, which was a Friday, like today, also in the month of Ramadan.

Dr Mahathir then walked over to the lobby where he clocked out at 5.07pm, witnessed by staff of the Prime Minister's Department.

The Prime Minister then walked with Dr Mahathir and Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali to their car.

Dr Mahathir spent about 20 minutes shaking hands with the officers and staff as he walked towards his car.

Dr Mahathir's historic departure from the Bangunan Perdana Putra was recorded by hundreds of local and foreign press photographers and TV cameramen.

After seeing Dr Mahathir off, the Prime Minister waved to the people present and then got into his official car.

-- BERNAMA

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