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Dr M: Up to Pak Lah to decide on his deputy

Nik Imran Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight said he would leave it to his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi to decide on his deputy when Abdullah assumes the premiership.

Dr Mahathir said this was Abdullah's prerogative.

"No, no, there is no advice ...(that's) his business," he said when asked whether Abdullah had consulted him for advice on the appointment of the next Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after performing the terawih prayers at the National Mosque after breaking fast with about 10,000 people.

Also present were Abdullah and other Cabinet members including Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakub, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Senator Datuk Seri Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin and Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor

Before the breaking of fast, which was organised by the Federal Territory Umno liaison committee, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, also handed out presents to 1,600 poor people who received RM100, rice, dates and medicine.

To a question from a foreign journalist, Dr Mahathir said he had his day running the country and it was now the turn of others to lead.

"I had 22 years and I think that's enough. If I live a 100 years there will still be things that cannot be done.

"I can't complain. I'm quite happy as I am," he said.

On the silence of other Muslim leaders who did not defend him when he was attacked by the West over his remarks on Jews, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't expect them to defend me. I have never been defended by them anyway. ...I have never been defended by most other countries. I say what I want to say, I don't expect people to support me.

"I only say what I think is the truth and you know the pressure the Muslim countries are under at the moment.

"You say anything and sanctions will be applied, all kinds of arm-twisting will be applied to them. So they do not say anything. But I know they do sympathise with what I see."