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Isa prepared to step down for Abdullah to form his line-up

Hamidah Atan; Alina Simon

SEREMBAN, Mon. - Umno's longest-serving Menteri Besar, Tan Sri Mohd Isa Samad, today said he was prepared to step down.

The four-term Menteri Besar, who is also State Umno liaison committee head, said: "I don't have any problem resigning ... I am willing to do so," he said when asked to comment on a statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that it would be good if Umno's elected representatives offered to resign to enable his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, to form his own line-up for the next general election.

Dr Mahathir said Abdullah should be given a chance to rearrange everything.

Isa, 54, a former teacher, was made Menteri Besar in May 1982. He had been executive councillor for education and social services since 1978, the year he contested the Linggi State seat and won with a majority of 2,390 votes.

Isa said he supported Dr Mahathir's view that Abdullah should be given the opportunity to prepare his own line-up.

"It is very sincere of the Prime Minister to come up with such a statement. He should be supported by all Umno leaders. I believe all Umno leaders do not have any problem offering their resignation."

Isa added that it was important for Umno leaders to remember that not everybody could be picked as candidates in the next general election.

"What is more important is that as Umno members, we must support whoever is picked as candidates, regardless of whether they are incumbents or not."

Asked whether elected Umno representatives in the State had voiced their willingness to resign, Isa said: "I don't want to say anything about this."

In Alor Star, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain said he was ready to step down with the blessings of party leaders and the rakyat.

By doing so, he felt it would pave the way for Abdullah and the people to choose the best candidates.

"We will resign if the people do not like our leadership and we will accept the decision of the leaders," he said after seeing off 80 pilgrims at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport in Kepala Batas.

Syed Razak is also the State Umno liaison committee chief.