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Making way for new line-up (HL)

By Annie Freeda Cruetz; Chow Kum Hor

PETALING JAYA, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said it would be good if Umno elected representatives offer to resign so that his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, could form his own line-up for the next general election.

"I suppose it will give Abdullah a chance to rearrange everything. Of course, some of us have been around for a long time, some as long as I have been PM (and) appointed by me.

"I think Pak Lah should have a chance to appoint somebody himself. It will be good if everybody resigns. I am serious. If we all resign, we will see new appointments. We musn't think that a post is permanently ours," he said when asked to comment on Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob's statement last Wednesday that he (Adnan) and all the Pahang State Executive Councillors were willing not to contest in the next general election.

Dr Mahathir was speaking upon arrival at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang here after a weeklong visit to Lebanon, Egypt and Switzerland.

Yesterday, Umno information chief Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob, supreme council members Datuk Annuar Musa, Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad and Kangar MP Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Pawan Teh also expressed readiness not to stand in the next general election.

On Thursday, Barisan Nasional secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said BN elected representatives who felt they were not effective in serving their constituencies should voluntarily step down and not leave their fate to the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir had announced his intention to step down as Prime Minister in October to make way for Abdullah.

Responding to Dr Mahathir's advice, Backbenchers Club president Datuk Mohd Zin Mohamad said it would enable Abdullah to choose his own line-up.

Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan said it would allow new faces an opportunity to serve.

On recent allegations that two Pas executive councillors in Terengganu had used zakat (tithe) funds to finance their children's education, Dr Mahathir said it would not be wise to fund children whose parents were relatively well-off. "This is also against the teachings of Islam which stipulates that the tithes should be distributed fairly."

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