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Musa: I will not contest against Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Tan Sri Musa Hitam said today that he had no desire to challenge Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for the Umno presidency, adding that if he did, he would lose.

"I feel there is no reason for me personally to try to get back into the fray because, unlike others, I have been out of active politics for so long and I hold no position whatsoever in the party or the Government," he said when contacted.

He was asked to comment on remarks by Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a Malay newspaper today that he was worried there would be a scramble for the deputy president and vice-presidents' posts after he steps down.

Dr Mahathir had said that he was not worried about Abdullah being challenged when he assumes the party presidency.

He had also remarked that he did not think either Umno supreme council member and Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah or Musa (a former party deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister) would challenge Abdullah, adding that if either of them did, he would not win.

Musa said that he "absolutely agreed" with Dr Mahathir's contention.

"I am getting on. I'm getting old. And I believe I should stay out. It is based on my fundamental belief that there should be an infusion of more younger people into the party to ensure that Umno remains strong and dynamic."

Musa called on all quarters to "give Pak Lah a break" and give him "maximum support".

He expressed the hope that people would stop making speculations about him or any other leader having intentions to challenge Abdullah.

Abdullah takes over as Prime Minister and Umno president after Dr Mahathir steps down in October.

Razaleigh could not be reached for comments.