

PM 'surprised' by Muhyiddin's U-turn
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today expressed surprise over senior cabinet colleague Muhyiddin Yassin's call for the premier to hasten his exit plan.

"That is his opinion. I am very surprised he came out with such an opinion, he already agreed on that (to the transition plan) before. I am surprised that a member of my cabinet came out with that kind of statement going against what has already been agreed," he said.

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he was visibly upset when reporters posed him with this question during a press conference in Putrajaya.

He stressed that the transition plan was agreed to by the cabinet and Umno.

Abdullah said that he had a lot of responsibilities and problems to solve before handing over the reins to his deputy Najib Razak in 2010.

"I am not staying on just for the pleasure of staying on. I tell you this is not a work I can regard as a pleasure, there are a lot of responsibilities and problems that need to be attended to, (as well as) programmes that I have already indicated that I will do my best to complete," he added.

According to him, these responsibilities include reforming the judiciary, police, Anti-Corruption Agency as well as eradicating poverty.

"The IPCMC (Independent Police Complaint and Misconduct Commission) is also a matter to be looked into, it is the last part of the reform (on the police force)," he said.

On whether he will ask Muhyiddin to explain, the premier replied: "There is no need to ask me what I am going to do. Next question, enough for this (subject)."

Dr M's return to Umno

Muhyiddin Yassin, Malaysian Service Development Council (MSC) chairman, also the international trade and industry minister, said in Singapore yesterday that Abdullah should consider stepping aside before the 2010 deadline.

He said 2010 was too far away and recent political setbacks faced by the ruling coalition should prompt Abdullah to rethink his decision.

Muhyiddin, who is one of the three elected Umno vice-presidents and will defend the same post in the coming December party polls, said an earlier leadership transition would give BN time to prepare for the next general election.

Abdullah was met by reporters after chairing the 20th Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) Malaysia implementation council meeting at his office and the launch of 'ICT as a career of choice campaign'.

Muhyiddin was also present at the two-and-a-half hour closed-door meeting but left without speaking to reporters. Other ministers who were present included Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Dr Maximus Ongkili and Education Minister Hishammuddin Hussein.

Meanwhile, on Muhyiddin's earlier statement which confirmed ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's intention to rejoin Umno, Abdullah declined to state his personal stand on the issue.

"My view alone will not be enough, this is a party matter," he emphasised when asked on the matter repeatedly.

To another question, Abdullah said the status of the BN component party Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp), which has been asked to show cause, remained unclear.

He said the BN supreme council met on Tuesday was for a "very specific purpose" - the racial slur controversy involving an Umno division leader. Therefore, the Sapp matter was not discussed.

Sapp was asked to show cause and explain why it should not be sacked from the ruling coalition after stating it had lost confidence in Abdullah. The party has responded to the letter.

No censorship on Internet to continue

On the MSC implementation council meeting earlier, Abdullah said he was pleased with the successes of the MSC for the past 12 years since the initiative was launched.

He announced that a new committee will be set up for the second stage of the MSC, called the MSC Malaysia 2.0, to look at methods to push Malaysia's competitiveness beyond that of developing the ICT industry.

For the second stage of the MSC, Abdullah vowed that he will continue the government's pledge not to censor the Internet.

The promise of not censoring the Internet was stated under the Bill of Guarantee when the MSC - Malaysia's own Silicon Valley - was set up.

"We will not censor the Internet, it's an Internet protocol but if they abuse the use and freedom of the Internet to the extent that it goes against the law, of course we have to take action," he said.

Nevertheless, he defended the recent government's ban on the popular Malaysia Today website by ordering all the ISPs (Internet service providers) in the country to block the website.

"There are other things and reasons that the home minister (Syed Hamid Albar) is aware of and led to what he has to do," said Abdullah.