

'I promise to hand over to Anwar'

Calls for him to stay on as PM grow louder, but Dr M is not budging

PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is adamant about keeping his promise to step down once the country is stable and on firmer ground, despite rising calls that he serve his full term as Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir, in reference to such calls from leaders like PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali and PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (for him to serve full term), said they were entitled to their opinions.

"But I have given my undertaking that I will step down when I find the situation in the country has been put on an even keel, and can carry on from there.

"It may be two years; may be three years...I don't know but we are working oh that," he told reporters after a closed-door roundtable discussion with the International Chambers of Commerce yesterday.

In an interview with a Turkish international news channel during his recent visit to the country, Dr Mahathir also gave the same assurance that he would not renege on his agreement to hand over the leadership to PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Asked if he would not even consider the idea to stay on for a term, Dr Mahathir replied: "(not) unless they push me to a corner, put a gun to my head and say you continue until you finish your term.

"Unless you do that, I will step down. I will keep my promise," he said.

The Prime Minister also confirmed that several Opposition lawmakers had met with him on Tuesday night.

"Have you been spying on me?" he asked the media when the question was raised to him.

Acknowledging that the meeting did take place, Dr Mahathir said the Opposition representatives wanted to see him.

"I saw them and I listened to what they



Pushing for greater growth: Dr Mahathir chairing the roundtable discussion with the International Chambers of Commerce in Putrajaya. — Bernama

wanted to say. A lot of them expressed support for me, thank you very much," he said.

He also said that he met the representatives who came from Umno, PAS and from Sarawak.

The Star reported that Opposition representatives had met with Dr Mahathir to urge him to stay the full term, as they felt that nobody should take over the helm of the country midway.

While the Prime Minister did not indicate

the identity of the Opposition representatives, it was reported that those in attendance at the meeting included former Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, PAS vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Samsuri Ahmad Mokhtar, PAS secretary-general Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan and Gabungan Parti Sarawak chief whip Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.

A high-ranking Pakatan Harapan leader, who is also a Cabinet minister, was also said to be present after having been called to join

the meeting by Dr Mahathir.

Asked to confirm if the minister was Azmin, the Prime Minister replied: "It's a secret meeting, I can't tell you."