

'Thank you for giving back my husband'

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PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali now feels a sense of relief as the country and the people of Malaysia "have returned my husband back to me and my family".

She was now looking forward to spending more time with him, she told reporters at a farewell press conference by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, several hours before his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was sworn in as the fifth Prime Minister.

"I feel relieved. I appreciate the country and the people for giving me back my husband whom I have loaned for the past 22 years.

"I am now looking forward to him spending more time with the family than before," Dr Siti Hasmah said, adding that she would relinquish most of her posts in both international and local organisations.

These positions, which she had held in her capacity as the First Lady, would be handed over to Datin Paduka Seri Endon Mahmood,

wife of the new Prime Minister.

"There are a few that I will retain, but I will be selective," Dr Siti Hasmah said.

Asked to comment on her husband's famous traits of remaining calm even in the face of crisis, she said she was thankful that he was blessed with that ability.

Dr Mahathir, she said, was able to do that because he always analysed problems before taking any action.

However, she said, that calmness was only skin deep.

"Sometimes he may look calm on the outside, but when he comes home, we can see that he had been under tremendous pressure.

"On certain occasions, you can see it in his blood-shot eyes."

Dr Siti Hasmah said, sometimes, she would not tell Dr Mahathir about any family problem as she did not want to add more pressure on her husband, especially at times when she knew that he was trying to solve national problems.