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# No regrets, says Pak Lah

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## PM: Decision to hand over power to Najib did not trouble me

**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says he does not regret his decision to hand over power earlier to Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"The decision did not trouble me. A decision had to be made and I had considered it very well. I felt good about it and that was why I could be cheerful," he said in an interview with Bernama.

Thanking God for making it easy for him to decide, Abdullah said it was in the best interest of the country and the party.

Having made the decision, it would "allow us to focus on the job at hand", he said in reference to the over-politicking that had taken

place since the March 8 general election.

"I intend to use the months ahead to carry out my agenda. Leaving the limelight and giving up power is not my main concern," said Abdullah, who appeared relaxed at his official residence at Seri Perdana.

When asked what went through his mind before he made his decision, he replied:

"After the elections, there were people who held me responsible and said I must go," he said, adding that there were some who supported him strongly, urging him to continue working to complete his mission.

"I had to look at the situation and finally made up my mind that it was the right time to

hand over the responsibilities."

Asked whether he had informed the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of his decision not to contest the Umno presidency, the Prime Minister said he had not as it was purely a party matter.

"I'm still the Prime Minister. When it comes to the need to hand over or to appoint the successor, then it is important to inform the King," he explained, adding that the Government had put in place a good foundation and was guided by the national mission - achieving Vision 2020.

Abdullah was confident that his successor would continue his work while urging Umno and Barisan to be united in dealing with all challenges.

Asked on demands by some quarters for him to leave the stage now and not say anything between now and March next year, Abdullah said he knew what he had to do and that since he was still the Prime Minister, there was no reason for him to keep quiet.

"I have planned my retirement, I have planned ahead when I need to hand over and what to do. I am not staying on just to bask in the glory of being Prime Minister. I have decided to stay on because I have a mission. I must make good on promises I made."

On why he did not announce his reforms for the judiciary and the Anti-Corruption Agency before the elections otherwise they would have supported them, he gave an assurance that he would implement a few reforms.

On whether he would miss the hustle and bustle of the highest office of the land, he said:

"I will know it when I retire. I can safely say that I will not be trying to govern from the sidelines," he said.

Asked whether his stance on giving greater leeway to freedom and openness had led to his downfall politically, he said many people have their own views.

"In this era, where people have access to information through various sources you have to be able to embrace openness. You don't muzzle the press.

"If certain newspapers were to have heavy censorship on one particular subject, people can still have access to information through other sources," he said, adding that a new, educated and better-informed generation had emerged and Barisan should learn to explain its policies better.

Freedom of openness had created abuse which was why the country still needed laws like the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Sedition Act, and the Official Secrets Act as a check and balance, he said.

"We have bodies like Pemudah, where criticism of government machinery is expressed frankly to the faces of senior civil servants."

On what he wanted to do most upon retiring as the Premier, he said he would have more time for his grandchildren and other things like golf and fishing. Asked how he would like to be remembered, he said:

"I will leave that to the people to determine. I am just thankful that I have managed to serve my country for this long." - Bernama