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PM surprised over Muhyiddin's statement

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday expressed surprised over the statement by Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that he should rethink his plan to step down by 2010 as the timeframe is too long.

Abdullah, who is also Umno president, said: "He already agreed on that before and now he said it again. The cabinet understood it and agreed with it. The Umno Supreme Council had also agreed on that. I am surprised a member of my cabinet should come up with that kind of statement which is against what has already been agreed."

Speaking to reporters at his office after chairing the 20th MSC Malaysia Implementation Council Meeting, Abdullah said: "I am not staying on just for the pleasure of staying on. I tell you this is not a work that I can regard as pleasure. There's a lot of responsibilities and problems that need to be attended to."

"There's a lot of programmes that I have already indicated that I must do my best to complete."

Muhyiddin had claimed in Singapore on Wednesday that the transition plan, for Abdullah to hand over the post of prime minister, the chairmanship of Barisan Nasional and presidency of Umno to Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, had "sunk away" and the people were not thinking about it anymore.

Abdullah said among the things he

needed to do were the reforms in Anti-Corruption Agency and the police.

He said although the reforms in the police force started more than two years ago, there is still the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission which has yet to be looked into.

Abdullah said he had also promised

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to achieve eradication of hardcore poverty, and there is also a lot of work to be done to reform BN and Umno to expand their capacity in serving the people.

"This is something that I have made it my responsibility to undertake and to help Najib also to achieve the objectives of the programmes I have just stated."

Asked whether he is going to meet Muhyiddin on this matter, a visibly annoyed Abdullah said: "There is no need to ask me what I'm going to do. Enough of this. Next question."

On former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's intention to rejoin Umno as mentioned by Muhyiddin on

Tuesday, Abdullah said the matter has yet to be discussed and he personally could not make a decision on it.

"My view alone is not enough. This is a matter for the party. I cannot make a stand on this."

Asked whether there was any decision on the Sabah Progressive Party, he said the Umno Supreme Council had met on Wednesday for a specific reason, that is for Datuk Ahmad Ismail's case, and no other subject was discussed.

On the MSC Malaysia, he said the meeting agreed for a second stage of expansion after successfully completing the first development stage which had involved among others, the e-government project.

For this purpose, MSC will set up a committee to itemise the various steps needed to be taken and it will later be presented to the implementation council and if money is required, the cabinet will be informed.

Asked whether the government would continue with its policy of not censoring the internet in the second stage of the MSC, he said: "We will not censor the internet. That's internet protocol. But if they abuse the use and freedom of the internet, to the extent that it goes against our law, of course we have to take action."

When suggested that the earlier ban on the Malaysia-Today website did not show this, he said there were reasons that Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar was aware of that have led to him taking such an action.



Abdullah says MSC Malaysia now houses 2,170 MSC-status companies, a 19% increase from 2006.

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