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Abdullah-Law

NOBODY IS ABOVE THE LAW, SAYS ABDULLAH BADAWI

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- Law-abiding people should not fear living in Malaysia as evidenced by the the good life Malaysians are enjoying, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

However, he said nobody - even the popular, the powerful or the influential - was above the law in Malaysia.

"If you are okay with the law, you should not fear living in Malaysia at all and many people are happy living in Malaysia, enjoying a good life there," he told the CNBC television channel in an interview from New York tonight.

Abdullah, who is in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly, was asked whether the Malaysian society could feel safe following events surrounding the downfall of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who has been removed from the Cabinet and Umno.

"Anwar was detained not without reasons...his fall from grace was because he has committed some very serious offences under the Penal Code," he said.

Anwar is currently detained under the Internal Security Act for threatening national security following rioting in the federal capital by his followers on Sept 20. He has also been charged in court on charges of corruption and unnatural sex.

To a question whether Anwar, who was Umno deputy president before his expulsion, would have a fair trial given the enormous publicity that the case has attracted, Abdullah said he was sure that this would be the case.

Abdullah was also asked whether he was worried over the spectre of sanction being imposed on Malaysia.

He said: "We do worry about sanction but at the same time we do not see why any government or institution wants to impose sanction on us for what has happened to Anwar.

"This is not something unusual as it can happen to any individual in Malaysia, even one who holds a high office in the government."

On the question of whom he thought would step in Anwar's shoes and, in the long term, Dr Mahathir's, Abdullah said: "Umno will have to decide on that, that has always been our tradition."

Abdullah, who is also one of Umno's three vice-presidents, said he would consider taking part in the contest for the post of Umno deputy president during party election next year.

"It is Dr Mahathir's prerogative to decide who will be his deputy for the time being before the Umno election decides on the deputy-president," he added.

He said the fight for certain positions, especially at the level of deputy president, could cause a lot of problem to Umno members for they would have to make a decision.

"We can only hope that if that happens, it will only be temporary for the reason that they have to decide on somebody and we just hope that after that everybody will close ranks," he added.

On reports that certain countries were having second thought about taking part in the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (Apec) forum in Kuala Lumpur next month arising from the detention of Anwar, Abdullah said it was entirely their choice whether to participate or not.

"As far we are concenred, we are making all the preparations for Apec. If it is not their wish to be in Malaysia, there's nothing we can do about

it," he said.
-- BERNAMA
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