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Abdullah-CNN

ABDULLAH: POLLS HAS LOT TO DO WITH MALAY UNITY

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- The upcoming general election has lot to do with Malay unity and the country's leadership, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said Malaysia practised the formula of power sharing among various communities with each community represented in the Cabinet.

Under the power-sharing concept, the leadership always came from the Malay community and as such, Malay unity was vital.

"Yes, it has a lot to do with Malay unity and leadership. In this power-sharing concept, the leadership comes from the Malay community and that certainly underscores the important of the Malay unity in any elections we hold in Malaysia," he said in an interview with CNN.

Abdullah was asked how much the Nov 29 election has to do with Malay unity and leadership of the country.

On criticisms by the Opposition that they were not given enough time to prepare for the polls, Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said opposition parties have been campaigning for the past two years.

"The Opposition always criticise us whenever elections are held and they complain the time is too short. Actually, they've been campaigning for almost two years by now. So, nothing to complain about short time," he said.

Asked on the strength of the opposition alliance, Abdullah said the four-member so-called Alternative Front was not strong enough.

"I don't think they're strong enough at the moment but very much in disarray. The only objective that binds them together is because they're opposing us. Besides that, they don't have anything in common," he said.

Abdullah was also asked on DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang's statement today that a suit would be filed in court tomorrow to compel the Election Commission to allow the 650,000 newly-registered voters to cast their ballots in the Nov 29 snap polls or delay the election till their names were included in the electoral rolls.

Abdullah said since the election was held this year, the commission had to use this year's electoral lists.

"This is not something improper. What we do is proper," he said.

He assured the people the polls would be conducted fairly as was done in the past nine general elections.

"The Opposition will always complain. I think they're just trying to find excuses ahead of their defeat," he said.

On the eligibility of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to stand in the election, Abdullah said he was leaving the matter to the court to make a decision.

He said Anwar's lawyers were expected to raise the matter in court.

Asked whether Anwar was a threat to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, he said: "I don't think so."

To another question whether First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin would contest in the polls, he said: "Well, I've been asking whether he is going to stand or not in the election. But I predict he will."

-- BERNAMA

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