

06/02/1999

Abdullah to assume responsibilities of Umno deputy president

Ramlan Said; Marhalim Abas

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Umno supreme council today decided that vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would assume the responsibilities of the party's deputy president.

The decision came after a proposal from party president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Abdullah, who is Deputy Prime Minister, be asked to carry out the duties of the deputy president.

The post has been vacant since Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was removed from the Government and party last September.

Abdullah was appointed Deputy Prime Minister on Jan 11. He is also Home Minister.

Speaking to reporters after the council's monthly meeting at Menara Dato' Onn, Abdullah said he had not been appointed acting deputy president but only directed to carry the duties of one.

Abdullah chaired the later part of the meeting because Dr Mahathir had to leave early to bid farewell to visiting Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

"Dr Mahathir directed me to chair the meeting and to meet the Press to announce the decisions made," Abdullah said.

Asked whether the council's decision was an endorsement for him if he makes a bid for the deputy president's post in the party elections next year, Abdullah said the question did not arise.

"There is no need to answer this. The point is that someone has been directed to assume the deputy president's duties, and what's important is that these are carried out."

Asked about his feelings on the decision, Abdullah said the decision meant additional responsibilities for him. He said would carry them out to the best of his ability.

Vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, met after the meeting, said the council's decision was not a precedent as it had happened before. He expected party members to accept the decision.

Najib said: "In 1976, Dr Mahathir assumed the duties of the deputy president after he was chosen as Deputy Prime Minister ... and when he made the proposal today, the supreme council fully endorsed it.

"It is appropriate for Abdullah to assume the duties since he has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister," he added.

(END)