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Abdullah-Harakah

ACTION AGAINST HAKAKAH NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, SAYS DPM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 27 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the government did not act against PAS' official publication Harakah before last month's general election because any action then would have been interpreted as politically motivated.

"(Recent) Police action in seizing copies of Harakah is due to the fact that they have breached the laws and the permit issued to them.

"Action could not be taken before the last election because the public would then say it was politically motivated," the Deputy Prime Minister told reporters at the breaking of fast with staff and management of Utusan Melayu at its office here tonight.

Abdullah, who is Home Minister, said the recent police action to seize copies of Harakah was not due to political differences.

He said the Harakah management had been called up many times and warned by the Home Ministry "but it is clear that the government's warnings were ignored by them".

"They said O.K...thank you but after they did it again. And the distribution of Harakah at mosques is also inappropriate unless all those who go to pray at mosques are PAS members," he said.

Abdullah, who is Umno vice-president performing the duties of the deputy president, also dismissed opposition allegations that Umno controlled the local mainstream media.

"If we control them, definitely all the stories will be good (about us)," he said.

He said it was clear that the opposition claims were baseless as Umno was not free from attacks by the mainstream media.

"Because there have been many instances when the government was also hurt and sometimes we were enraged by reports in the mainstream media," he said.

Asked on government efforts to win back anti-government imams, he said: "The important thing is for us to continue with information activities."

"As an imam, his role is to unite the community and ensure that they want to cooperate. To our people in the villages, when a person becomes an imam, the expectations on him are very high," Abdullah said.

Asked on Terengganu Menteri Besar Abdul Hadi Awang's statement that the federal government should not disturb the PAS-led state government, Abdullah said the central government was never in the habit of disturbing anyone.

"They have formed the state government, so let them administer the way they like and let the people judge their actions," he said.

Abdullah, who has replaced Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad as Terengganu Umno chief, said efforts would be made to strengthen the state Umno.

"I will visit the state after Hari Raya. However, contacts have been made with them (Terengganu Umno)," he said.

Asked about the problems in Aceh, he said Malaysia was not interested in the matter anymore and was leaving it to the people and government of Indonesia to settle their internal problems.

Abdullah was also asked about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement last Thursday that Umno would support Abdullah as his successor in the party.

Abdullah said: "I consider I was not asked this question."

Present at the function were Utusan Group executive chairman Tan Sri

Kamarul Ariffin, deputy executive chairman Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin and editor-in-chief Khalid Mohamed.

-- BERNAMA

JAY YBY