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DPM: Support guaranteed

Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The decision to drop any incumbent from contesting in the general election will not create problems for Barisan Nasional, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said coalition members had already agreed that all candidates would receive their full support, including the new faces.

"Those dropped must give their support to their replacements. If support is given to them when they were contesting, they must now do the same thing to others."

Speaking to reporters after launching a low-cost housing project in Bandar Sri Permaisuri today, Abdullah said for Umno, its state liaison chiefs had agreed in a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the selection of candidates for the party would not lead to any problem.

"It is not new to BN. We have already gone through nine general elections, and this (dropping of incumbents) has been done before."

The Deputy Prime Minister was earlier asked to comment on whether it was true that some Menteri Besar and Ministers would be dropped or would be contesting for parliamentary seats.

"These are only speculations. I don't think it is proper for me to say anything on it."

On the police report by Parti Keadilan Nasional Youth chief Ezam Mohamad Nor, urging the police to investigate Abdullah's son for alleged corrupt practices, the Deputy Prime Minister said he was leaving it to his son.

"Yes, I was surprised when informed about the matter. But since a report has been made, it is up to him to take whatever legal action...he is also a lawyer."

To a suggestion that the report was made by the Opposition to tarnish his name, he said: "It could be."

Abdullah also advised companies to make preparations from now to ensure that their employees would be able to cast their votes in the general election.

He said this could be done as polling day had already been set by the Election Commission.

"We already know the date which is Nov 29...employers can expect many (workers) would want to vote, so it is better if preparations are made from now...don't create unnecessary obstacles like having additional shifts on that day."

Abdullah said employers could not stop their workers from exercising their right to vote.

On Cuepacs' proposal that polling day be declared a public holiday, he said although he alone could not make a decision on the matter, views of the congress and other bodies and associations would be taken into consideration.

To a suggestion that voter turnout might be affected since Nov 29 is a working day, Abdullah said this would be determined by the voters.

"If they are really serious about it, they will come and vote. Time off can be arranged," said the Umno deputy leader.

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