

05 JUL 1999

Abdullah-Syndrome

NO "MUTE SYNDROME" IN UMNO AND GOVT, SAYS ABDULLAH

PUTRAJAYA, July 5 (Bernama) -- "Mute syndrome? What mute syndrome?". That sums up Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's reaction to allegations that Umno and the government are plagued by a so-called mute syndrome which is characterised by intolerance to views.

Abdullah said neither Umno nor the government was afflicted by such a syndrome.

He said whatever the forum -- be it a Cabinet, Umno or the Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting, the leaders have always been free to express their views openly.

"The prime minister has never stopped anyone from discussing issues raised at meetings that he chairs," Abdullah told reporters who approached him after receiving his Kyrgyz counterpart Esengul Omuraliev at his office here today.

Abdullah was asked about national laureate Datuk Shahnun Ahmad's claim that it was the so-called "mute syndrome" within Umno and the government that prompted him to write the controversial novel "Shit".

The deputy prime minister said Shahnun was ignorant of what transpired in Umno and the government and his writing reflected detached views based on second-hand information.

"He was not involved in any of the discussions between party or government leaders. Had he been in the know, he would not have entertained such thoughts," said Abdullah.

On Shahnun's reported denial about offering a public apology to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for insulting the Prime Minister in the novel, Abdullah said this made it difficult to take Shahnun seriously.

"It is difficult when you say one thing this moment, and another the next. His mind is pretty mixed up about what to say or do," said Abdullah.

Shahnun had reportedly apologised to the prime minister if his novel had insulted Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah said he did not find it strange for Shahnun to defend his novel while the public denounced the crude and unacceptable language that Shahnun used in "Shit".

Abdullah also defended the local Press for reporting about Shahnun's apology offer and also the laureate's denial about making the offer the next day.

"At times what is reported may not be palatable. Most people would enjoy reading anti-government items or lies," he said.

Abdullah added that detractors, Shahnun included, would always brand local journalists as government sycophants when they came up with seemingly pro-establishment clarifications or informative reports.

-- BERNAMA

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