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Stop associating members with `camps', says Abdullah

Lee Keng Fatt; Marina Emmanuel

NIBONG TEBAL, Mon. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today urged Umno members not to talk about "Pak Lah's men" and "Not Pak Lah's men".

Advising Umno members to close ranks, the Umno vice-president said he had heard much about members putting themselves in one camp or the other or talking of others in those terms.

"I have also heard people saying so-and-so is Pak Lah's man and not Pak Lah's man. I do not want to listen to such things anymore. We should stop this."

He was addressing 2,000 people at the Hari Raya open house, jointly organised by the Umno Nibong Tebal division and Pemadam Seberang Prai Selatan, at the Bukit Jawi Golf Resort in Sungai Bakap near here. Also present were Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib, Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Dr Ibrahim Saad, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Mohd Shariff Omar and organising chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdullah.

Abdullah, also Penang Umno Liaison Committee chairman, derided the creation of camps or associating members with camps as causing rifts which were not beneficial to Umno and the country.

Stressing that Barisan Nasional component parties should remain united and internally strong, he said this was what was meant by kongsi kuasa (power-sharing) in politics.

Abdullah, also Home Minister, said Malaysians lived in peace and stability without fear of violence because of the unity and cordial relationship between BN leaders.

"The scenario in other countries is different. People dare not stay out too long, even after conducting Friday prayers at mosques, for fear of being bombed or attacked."

Later, speaking at a Hari Raya gathering at the Pesta grounds in Sungai Nibong, Penang, Abdullah said the methods implemented by the Prime Minister had insulated the Malaysian economy from being further battered, he said.

"I fear to imagine what would have happened to the economy had we (the Government) complied with measures prescribed previously."

"If we had been influenced by the views of Opposition parties, the International Monetary Fund, international economists and foreign media, we would have slipped further into recession."

With the firm stand of Dr Mahathir on currency speculation now globally understood, Abdullah said world leaders attending the World Economic Forum in Switzerland could now understand why Malaysia adopted its economic measures.

"We are not isolating ourselves," he said. "Malaysia does not only wish to be a national but global participant in economic issues."

Abdullah acknowledged the presence of multinationals in Penang, especially in the electronics sector whose foreign investments contributed to the State's growth.

"It is such contribution, along with high productivity of skilled workers that helped us ride the storm."

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