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Abdullah-Polls

UMNO BRANCH ELECTIONS SUSPENDED UNTIL GENERAL ELECTION

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 5 (Bernama) -- Umno has suspended party elections at the branch-level until the next general election, vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said the Umno Supreme Council agreed that the branch elections, scheduled to be held this year, be postponed to enable the party to concentrate on helping the government and prepare for the general election.

The council made the decision at its meeting here today chaired by Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah, who is Deputy Prime Minister, said Dr Mahathir would make nationwide tour soon to meet party leaders and the people.

State Umno liaison chairmen had been instructed to prepare for the tour which would start in Sabah, he told a press conference.

Dr Mahathir asked Abdullah to hold the press conference after leaving the council meeting midway to bid farewell to his Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who will be leaving home tomorrow after a three-day state visit.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir would determine the schedule of his nationwide tour upon his return from attending the summit of the Group of 15 developing countries in Jamaica.

The tour, he said, was aimed among others at enabling the Prime Minister to meet Umno divisional and branch leaders and discuss problems related to either the government or party.

"This is a good decision taken by Dr Mahathir and fully supported by the Supreme Council," he said.

Abdullah declined to comment when asked if the tour indicated that the general election would be held soon.

The Deputy Prime Minister said today's meeting also agreed to fully support the Sabah Barisan Nasional government in the state election which is expected to be held anytime now.

"Umno will go to Sabah to give support and assistance to the Barisan Nasional there, and we will seek the assistance of other BN component parties," he said.

Abdullah said Umno was of the stand that the present Sabah government was a BN government and it was the BN's responsibility to do everything it could in ensuring a BN victory.

"We are aware that the opposition parties in Sabah have made an issue of the presence of national BN leaders there with the aim of creating hatred and suspicion among the people of Sabah.

"Sabah Umno has agreed to inform the people of Sabah that our presence is for their own benefit, to ensure that the BN government that has contributed to Sabah and the people of Sabah...can continue," he said.

Abdullah said today's Supreme Council meeting also agreed with Dr Mahathir that toll highways should only be built if the people were prepared to pay the toll.

Following opposition from various quarters to the latest increase in toll rates on the North-South Expressway and other highways, Dr Mahathir had said no more toll highways would be built even though they were safer to use compared to normal roads.

-- BERNAMA

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