

DPM calls on public to stay away from illegal gathering

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DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has advised the public to stay away from illegal gatherings, reminding that police will not hesitate to take stern action against them if they flout the regulation.

"Those ignoring the law will face strict police action. Why court trouble by attending rallies which have no police permission?"

"No doubt we are a democratic country but at times we tend to get overzealous in using that freedom and tend to forget about the law and break the rules," he told newsmen after opening a three-day Software Piracy Summit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister was responding to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement last Sunday that Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan), supporters were planning to stage demonstrations in the city next Saturday.

He stressed that any illegal gathering could lead to fights and subsequently rioting which benefit no one and only to the country's detriment.

On whether the Gua Musang Umno division had contravened the party's regulation for not nominating anyone for the May elections and instead left it to the divisional committee to make the nominations, Abdullah said he has to look into the party's constitution carefully-before making any decision.

Abdullah who is also Umno management and disciplinary committee chairman described the move by Gua Musang Umno division as unprecedented but stressed that the party's Supreme Council directive on this was clear in that all (divisions must submit nominations for all posts for next month's Umno elections.

On the move by Perlis and Johor state governments to approve the enactments on Islamic principles, Abdullah said this was not based on Umno policy but the action of the respective state governments

"This is not Umno policy that were brought up and need the approval of the Supreme Council members," he said.

He was commenting on Perlis State Assembly's move to approve the Islamic Principle Protection Enactment (Perlis) two days ago to protect, rehabilitate and determine the Islamic principles for Muslims.

He was also asked to comment on the move by the Johor Religious Department to impose stroke penalty to offenders who flouted seven times the syariah crimes following the gazetting of the Syariah Crimes Enactment 1997 last year.