

# 'Close ties, with PM no disadvantage'

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## Abdullah: Not right to compare me with Habibie

By Abdul Razak Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today said his close association with party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should not be a disadvantage to his political career.

He said he worked closely with the Prime Minister because Dr Mahathir was a capable leader.

Abdullah was asked to comment on the campaign being carried out by some party members against him by saying that by being close to Dr Mahathir, he would suffer the same fate as former Indonesian President B.J. Habibie. Habibie was defeated in the presidential election as he, among others, was seen as being close to his predecessor Suharto.

"In comparing me to Habibie, are these people saying Dr Mahathir is like Suharto? Dr Mahathir is not Pak Harto, Malaysia is not Indonesia," he said after presenting donations to 381 orphans at the Tabung Haji headquarters.

Abdullah, who is the Deputy Prime Minister, said if he was compared to Habibie just because he was close with Dr Mahathir, "I

think it is not right".

He said he understood clearly his position, adding that: he was "not an alternative leader" to Dr Mahathir, "but his deputy".

Abdullah, who is discharging the duties of party deputy president, said he had never felt left out or obstructed from discharging his duties and as such saw no reason to feel overshadowed by Dr Mahathir.

"Why should I compete with him? It is not my duty to outdo him or compete with him,"

Asked about the possibility of certain members resorting to character assassinations of aspirants in Umno elections, he said they should not do so.

"What benefit can one derive from making personal attacks? If we say bad things about others it does not mean we are good," he said.

Abdullah warned that if this bad habit did not stop now, it would be difficult for the members to close ranks after the May general assembly. However, he was confident that Umno members were smart and knew the actual situation in the party and the capability of the party leaders.

"What they want is for the party to continue to be successful."

Abdullah was also asked on a foreign Press report quoting DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang as saying that the no-contest advice for the party's two top positions in the May election was undemocratic.

"Umno is a democratic party. People are saying that there be no contest, but even now, there are efforts undertaken by some to secure nominations; they are going back and forth looking for support," said Abdullah, adding that after nominations had been secured, efforts to campaign would move on to the elections.

"So the process goes on. How can it be said that there is no democracy?"

Asked on his advice to Umno's 165 divisions which have to hold their meetings between tomorrow and end of March, Abdullah, who is chairman of the party's management and disciplinary committee, said they should abide by party procedures. Abdullah earlier presented the donations to the orphans on behalf of the Federal Territory Orphans' Welfare Association, which managed to collect RM80,000 in donations. Also present was association president Tan Sri Ahmad Razali Mohd Ali.