

12 JAN 2000

Abdullah-Democracy

DEMOCRACY FLOURISHES IN UMNO, SAYS DPM

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- Democracy thrives well and flourishes in Umno, Deputy Prime Minister and party vice president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today, dispelling notions suggesting otherwise.

He was speaking in the context of the increasing endorsement by state Umno liaison committees for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's re-nomination for the presidency and Abdullah's nomination for the deputy president's post in the coming party elections in May.

The endorsement reflected the decision of Umno members who constantly enjoyed the freedom to express how they felt about party-related matters, said Abdullah.

"This is their decision...as I've said earlier, whatever their decision, whether they feel like expressing their views, it's entirely up to them, Umno members," he said emphasising that Umno did not put a limit to democratic practices.

"Democracy is flourishing in Umno," he said when reporters raised the matter during a press conference here after receiving his Iraqi counterpart Tariq Aziz here today.

At its meeting early this month, the Umno Supreme Council resolved that there should be no contest for the two top posts.

Abdullah is performing the duties of party deputy president following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998.

A programme on leadership which the party introduced yesterday for 100 Umno leaders would be extended and followed up by the Umno management and disciplinary committee which Abdullah chaired.

Yesterday's function held at the Prime Minister's Department here was also attended by Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir, who addressed the participants, spoke of various problems including internal party problems and the challenges ahead.

The Umno youth and women's wings had also expressed desire to start similar leadership programmes for their members, Abdullah added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM RYN