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Abdullah: Don't use Umno to garner support

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KAJANG, Sun. - Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said no one should use Umno's name to garner support in the coming Sarawak State election as the party was not involved in the polls.

He said those claiming that their actions and activities were endorsed or supported by Umno were telling lies.

"Umno is not involved in the election. I hope quarters who have been using the party's name to create the impression that they have our support will stop doing so."

Abdullah, who is Deputy Prime Minister, said this when asked to comment on reports that certain groups in Sarawak had been campaigning in the State that Umno supported their cause.

He was speaking at a Press conference after closing a workshop on strategic planning on rainforest at the Saujana Impian Golf and Country Resort.

On claims that the groups had the support of some party leaders from the peninsula, Abdullah said this was not allowed.

"The party president (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has made it clear from the beginning that no one should drag in the party."

On the workshop, Abdullah said a Cabinet committee on rainforest and biotechnology would be established soon.

He said the committee would look into the recommendations and findings from the four-day workshop as well as those from the first national seminar on rainforest held in May.

The workshop's aim is to formulate strategies and plans on rainforest knowledge industries.

The core elements are hospitality, education, ecomedia, policy and business and biodiversity and biotechnology.

Abdullah had also earlier proposed that experts in the field submit their views and recommendations to the Government for consideration.

"I will study their report first and then call for a meeting of the committee."

Commenting on concerns that matters concerning rainforest, biotechnology and biodiversity were under the purview of various ministries and agencies, which might lead to overlapping jurisdiction, Abdullah said it would not be so if there was co-ordination.

"This is not an issue ... if we can sit down together and give our views, we will find the answers.

"Recently when discussing the decline in palm oil prices, many ministries besides Primary Industries were involved. We managed to co-ordinate our efforts, instead of going against each other."

On the employment of foreign experts in biotechnology and biodiversity which might not be well-received by locals, Abdullah said terms favourable to both sides would have to be agreed upon before they could start work.