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Abdullah-Veterans

DON'T REGARD UMNO VETERANS AS A NEGLECTED LOT, SAYS ABDULLAH

PEKAN, April 21 (Bernama) -- Umno veterans should not be regarded as a neglected and irrelevant lot but as an inspiration to the young generation in the party, deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said their presence was very meaningful because by showing up at Umno functions they made the young generation feel the need to continue with the struggle started by the veterans.

"Even if they don't do anything activity-wise, when they show up at meetings, it boosts our spirit to see that they are still strong and spirited despite their age," he told reporters after opening the Pekan Umno division delegates meeting, here.

He said Umno valued the struggle of the veterans because it was through their struggle that the Malay race had benefited a lot through Umno today.

"Today they are still here...we cannot regard them as a neglected lot which has no meaning," he said.

Over 3,000 veteran Umno members at the branch and divisional levels, including former elected representatives, will assemble in Kuala Lumpur on May 11 where they will meet Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Abdullah to exchange views on the current political situation which poses so much challenge to Umno.

Abdullah said the young generation would carry on with the party's struggle because the old leaders had to step down and he hoped that they would be strong and credible.

Asked about unity among Umno members, he said efforts to promote unity at all levels had begun to bear fruit.

On the detention of another reformasi activist, Dr Badrul Amin Baharon, yesterday, Abdullah, who is deputy prime minister and home minister, said police acted based on evidence.

He said police would make arrests if the arrests were deemed necessary based on the information obtained and he had confidence in the police's ability to discharge their duties.

Dr Badrul Amin, 40, a former International Islamic University Malaysia lecturer, was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) at his house in Taman Desa Jaya, Kepong, at about 1.30am.

His arrest brings to eight the number of reformasi activists detained under the ISA since April 10 for allegedly planning to hold militant street demonstrations.

In his speech, Abdullah said the divisional elections were not aimed at giving victory to certain candidates but to give all members a chance to choose their leaders through the democratic process.

Ultimately, Umno would be the winner because it would have credible leaders chosen by the members themselves as it was the members who would determine its fate, he said.

"We are the ones who determine the leadership in Umno and after the decision is made, it is the responsibility of the elected leaders to lead all the members in the party...not only those who support them," he said.

He said the fact that most of the divisions did not have any contests for the three top posts showed that the spirit of consensus, consultation and cooperation existed in Umno.

-- BERNAMA

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