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Abdullah-Umno

UMNO LEADERSHIP WILL NOT MEDDLE IN DIVISIONAL POLLS, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 15 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as well as other top Umno leaders will not meddle in the party's upcoming branch and divisional elections.

"We the present leaders, such party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and I, will not meddle in divisional elections," said Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president.

As such, probable candidates should refrain from using party leaders' names to win votes, Abdullah said when addressing Umno branch and division leaders attending a party briefing at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

"I have heard a lot of stories about such and such a person wanting to contest against the division chief and that such person has my blessing and another is endorsed by the president.

"The talk is that there are some who are being asked to stand, claiming that they are vice-presidents Tan Sri Muhammad Mohd Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's men. What's all this? If you want to contest, by all means do so," said Abdullah.

Abdullah said he concurred with Dr Mahathir's call for party members to minimise contest in the coming party polls, starting next month for the branches and in April for the divisions, as Umno could not afford to continue to be problem-ridden and disunited.

"Uppermost is consensus and cooperation so that contest is kept to the minimum. This is good for Umno which is now facing a host of challenges," said Abdullah.

Umno's current problems were not caused by opposition parties like PAS but by politicking among its own members, he said.

"PAS will not be able to weaken or destroy Umno, but instead it is Umno's own people that is destroying the party," he said.

Abdullah reminded those involved in elections for party positions to avoid resorting to destructive ways such as being preoccupied with money politics.

"Never at all get involved in money politics. Are we that weak that we have to dish out lots of money to buy votes," he said.

Meanwhile, also speaking at the briefing, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said any violations of rules and breach of the Umno constitution during the elections would be referred to the Umno disciplinary board which comprised neutral members.

He said after the misfortune that befell Umno in the 1999 general election, the party could no longer be mired in problems.

Later when approached by reporters on money politics, Khalil said he would let the newly-formed party disciplinary board to handle such cases.

Party vice-presidents Tan Sri Muhammad Mohd Taib and Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, information chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamad and permanent chairman Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah also attended the briefing.

-- BERNAMA

MHI MS RYN