

Abdullah to assume the responsibilities of PM

(SUN - 2 FEB 2002)

PUTRAJAYA, Fri: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will assume the responsibilities of the prime minister while the latter is away for a month.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Abdullah will also assume the responsibility of the finance minister during the period.

He leaves for London tonight en route to New York where he will address the World Economic Forum and attend the Asia Networking Dinner prior to his vacation.

"He'll be carrying out the (PM's) duties ... he is, unofficially, acting (PM).

"Someone must take over the job. If not, if something happens, don't tell me you are going to search for me," he told reporters after launching the first anniversary of Putrajaya as the Federal

territory here today. Asked whether Abdullah will be assuming the responsibilities officially, Mahathir replied: "He is the acting prime minister. Official or not, I don't know. People make a fuss with such protocol, I don't really care about protocol."

Asked to comment on the statement by the office of the Registrar of Societies (ROS) in Kota Kinabalu that they will study the report on the conduct of the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) congress before taking any action, he said that they need to view it from the aspect of whether or not the law had been breached.

The party's internal problems heightened when two of its leaders, Tan Sri Joseph Kurup and Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan, claimed to be its legally elected president.