

# Keadilan proposal regressive, says PM's aide

KOTA KINABALU: A proposal by Parti Keadilan Nasional for the appointment of a second deputy prime minister from either Sabah or Sarawak is a regressive move, the Prime Minister's political secretary Datuk Dasuki Ahmad said yesterday.

"This is nothing more than a political gimmick," he said after a visit to the Sabah Umno office here.

He said Malaysians had reached a stage where they were already thinking of themselves as people of one country and the call by Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail would merely divide them again.

Dasuki said that since independence, Malaysian leaders were selected based on their ability and not from the states they came from.

"Our Prime Minister is from Kedah and if all goes well, the next one will be from Penang. But the criteria is not where they are from but it is because they have displayed their capabilities," he added.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is from Penang.

Dasuki said it was now possible for even a Sabahan to become a prime minister in the future provided the person was accepted by all Malaysians.

Sabah Umno information chief Datuk Rahim Ismail said it was easy for Dr Wan Azizah to make such a call because she knew well that Keadilan would never be able to come into power.

Dr Wan Azizah said on Sunday that a second deputy prime minister was needed because of the uniqueness of both states, adding that it would ensure greater representation of Sabah and Sarawak at the federal level while promoting greater national integration.

To a question yesterday on whether he saw certain quarters trying to pit the Government against the Ulama Association of Malaysia (PUM), Dasuki said the group now comprised mainly PAS leaders.

"PUM is now like a wing of PAS. It is constantly critical of the Government and never thankful ... it always sees the Government in a negative light," he said.

He said PUM would, however, remain silent when certain PAS leaders made statements that were clearly against the tenets of Islam.