Abdullah: Umno members barred from suing president and sec-gen

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KUALA LUMPR, Sat. — Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was against the party's constitution for members to sue the party president and secretary-general.

"The move can result in the sacking of members from the party. Whatever decision reached by the party cannot be challenged through legal actions such as suing the party.

"However, I have yet to receive anything official from their lawyers," he said.

Abdullah, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, was speaking after opening the *Positive Lives, Positive Responses to HIV* photographic exhibition at the National Art Gallery in Jalan Tun Razak.

He said this when commenting on the case of two Umno members — former Port Klang Umno branch treasurer Othman Ibrahim and former Selat Selatan branch commitee member Zulkifre Abu — who had filed an originating summons against the party president and secretary-general at the Shah Alam Court yesterday.

They named party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob as the first and second defendants respectively.

The originating summons was filed to seek a declaration that the Klang Umno divisional delegates' meetings held on April 22 last year and April 17 this year were null and void.

Both plaintiffs also called on Dr Mahathir and Khalil to give the order for another divisional delegates' meeting for 2001 and 2002 to be held, including the election of committee members.

Earlier in Shah Alam, Selangor Umno chief Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said he would propose to the supreme council that members from the State who referred party matters to court be expelled.

Describing those who were still doing it as "unwise", he said: "Umno members who go against such a ruling have shown that they do not love the party and we do not need such people."

Asked whether he believed there was a *dalang* (puppet master) behind the issue, he said he could not deny the possibility.

He also expressed concern for those involved because he believed that these members were being manipulated by certain quarters for their own political mileage.