

24 NOV 2002

Abdullah-Abstentions

ABSTENTIONS CAN SET A BAD PRECEDENT- DPM

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today said the move by the two Barisan Nasional (BN) members to abstain when a vote was taken on a DAP motion in the Penang State Assembly on Friday can set a bad precedent if action is not taken against them.

The Deputy Prime Minister said their action was something that could not be tolerated by the BN.

Abdullah said the issue would be discussed with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also BN Chairman before a decision on how to go about the matter was made. Dr Mahathir is currently visiting France and is scheduled to return home on Tuesday.

"We haven't decided yet on the form of action to be taken against the two," he told reporters after opening the Pan Malaysian Indian Progressive Front (IPF) 10th general assembly here.

On Thursday, the State Assembly Members from the MCA, Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat), abstained when the vote was taken on the DAP motion calling for the deferrment of the RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road project.

Commenting on a report that the MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik was seeking an appointment to see him on the case, Abdullah said he was willing to meet the MCA leader.

When pointed out that the two BN representatives did not support the motion but just abstained from the vote, the Deputy Prime minister said, "They have to vote...abstaining means they do not support the BN."

"...We do not allow anyone to abstain from the vote or condone absence in the House unless for valid reasons such as sickness, death or official duties overseas."

Commenting on a newspaper report that 11 Malaysian students had been deported from Britain for working illegally in several factories there, Abdullah said the government would not appeal the decision taken by the British authorities.

He said as they had committed an offence under British law, they had to be sent back to Malaysia.

"We are always embarrassed when a Malaysian living or visiting another country does something against the law of that land. They have to respect the law and if they have to come back, they must come back," said Abdullah who is also Home Minister.

He was also asked about the reported reluctance of several Taman Hillview residents to move out from their houses despite studies showing that the hillside area in Ampang, Selangor, was prone to landslides similar to the one last Wednesday that flattened the bungalow of their neighbour, former Armed Forces Chief Gen (Rtd) Tan Sri Ismail Omar.

To this, he said the residents involved should heed the recommendations of the authorities.

Noting that the government could not force them out from their homes, he said those who chose to stay put would be making that decision at their own risk.

Questioned on the reported cases of death in jails and police lock-ups, Abdullah said it was not fair to straightaway point the finger at the authorities when such incidents occurred.

He said in fact the relevant parties would be called up to check any case of unusual deaths.

In his keynote speech, Abdullah commended the IPF for its unflinching support and commitment to the BN despite not being a member of the ruling coalition.

He believed that becoming a BN component party was not the only purpose of the IPF struggle as its aim was also to fight for the betterment of the rakyat.

Responding to points raised by IPF president Datuk M.G.Pandithan in his speech earlier, the Deputy Prime Minister said the government would continue to create economic opportunities to help the Indian community.

He also said a long-term programme involving a RM20 million allocation had been drawn up to attract Indian youths to participate in healthy activities.

-- BERNAMA
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