

17/07/2002

Derogatory leaflets shameful, says DPM

PENDANG, Tues. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the distribution of Pas leaflets labelling him penjual babi (pork seller) is derogatory and shameful.

Over the last two days, four leaflets targeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Abdullah and Puteri Umno pro-tem chief Azalina Othman have been circulated to voters as part of the Opposition's election tactics.

The leaflets levelled criticism against Dr Mahathir and Abdullah, and labelled Dr Mahathir paderi besar gereja (church high priest) and Azalina agen Yahudi (agent of the Jews).

Abdullah's tag came about because he chaired the Cabinet Committee to combat the Japanese Encephalitis virus which hit Kampung Nipah in Lukut, Negri Sembilan in 1999.

"The responsibility to head the committee was given to me at the time and I did my job," said Abdullah. (The committee consisted of other Cabinet Ministers including Barisan Nasional component party heads.)

Abdullah said Pas should thank him for heading the committee given charge of curbing the spread of the deadly virus and not criticise him. "The virus does not know race, colour nor creed, neither does it look at whether one is an Umno or Opposition member before striking.

"Their action is despicable."

Abdullah who is Home Minister denied rumours of internal problems among State Umno members. "The Opposition will say just about anything to make us look bad. There is no such problem."

He said even if there were any personal differences among Kedah Umno members, they (members) were mature enough to set it aside and work together.

Earlier, at the Pendang district office ground-breaking ceremony, Abdullah received 56 applications from former Pas members to join Umno.

The group, headed by the former Pas' Taman Delima committee member Khairul Rizal Kassim submitted the forms to Abdullah. It was witnessed by BN Pendang candidate Datuk Othman Abdul.

Khairul Rizal, who was a Pas member for 10 years, said he chose to join Umno because he felt Pas leaders were without vision and could not bring the people forward.

"I can see that the BN government is more capable of handling the country and can look after the welfare of the people as it has been proven in many instances," said Khairul.

"Unlike Umno, Pas lacks leaders capable of looking after the needs of the people."