

20 APR 2002

Abdullah-Mahathir

ABDULLAH TAKES TELEPHONE CALL FROM PM IN TRIPOLI

KUALA NERANG, April 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had to briefly stop his speech when opening the Padang Terap Umno Division delegates meeting here today to answer a telephone call from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Tripoli.

The Deputy Prime Minister was just five minutes into his speech when the call came at 1.40pm.

Abdullah's aide-de-camp DSP Kamarul Bahrain went on stage and whispered something to him.

"Please excuse me as I have to stop for a while to answer a telephone call from the Prime Minister," Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president, told those present.

He then went to the back of the stage to answer the call and returned to continue with his speech five minutes later.

"I have just mentioned Dr Mahathir's name and he happened to call. May he be blessed with a long life," he said.

Abdullah told the gathering that Dr Mahathir was calling from Tripoli, Libya, and was preparing to depart for Bahrain for the last leg of his weeklong visit to three countries.

"Dr Mahathir has extended his regards to all Padang Terap Umno members and asked them to have an orderly meeting," he said.

Prior to taking the call, Abdullah was speaking about Dr Mahathir's role in developing the country's economy, including the setting up of Permodalan Nasional Berhad to get more Bumiputeras to participate in the unit trust industry.

In his speech, Abdullah said Malaysia was not a secular country as claimed by certain people because it took great concern on Islamic matters and the progress of Muslims.

However, the government had not neglected the interests of people of other races and religions, he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAN JM YBY