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Kit Siang wants clarification on selection of DPM

PENANG, Sat. - DAP national chairman Lim Kit Siang today called on Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to explain to the people whether he will pick his Deputy Prime Minister or allow the person who is elected Umno deputy president to assume the post.

Lim said while Umno would decide who would be its new deputy president, the public was entitled to know who was going to be the new Deputy Prime Minister.

"It is a matter of public interest and Malaysians are entitled to express their concern," he said.

Lim said although Abdullah could wait until October next year when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad steps down before deciding on the new Deputy Prime Minister, "Abdullah should explain what precedent he would follow in appointing his deputy."

In the first precedent set in 1976 when the late Tun Hussein Onn was made Prime Minister following the death of Tun Abdul Razak in London in January 1976, he (Tun Hussein) was seriously considering departing from the Umno tradition of appointing a deputy from the three incumbent Umno vice-presidents by appointing the then Home Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie as Deputy Prime Minister, Lim said.

He later chose Dr Mahathir from the other two vice-presidents, Tun Ghafar Baba and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

In the second precedent in 1981, when Dr Mahathir became the fourth Prime Minister, he made it clear that he would not decide who was to be the Deputy Prime Minister but would leave it to Umno, Lim said.