

24 NOV 2002

Abdullah-Assemblymen

NO CRACKS IN BN IF ISSUE HANDLED WELL, SAYS ABDULLAH

KEPALA BATAS, Nov 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today that the issue of two MCA state assemblymen defying the Penang Barisan Nasional (BN) whip will not cause cracks in the coalition if it is handled properly.

The Deputy Prime Minister said if the matter was handled fairly and correctly according to the party constitution, there was no reason for it to adversely affect the ruling coalition.

"But if this issue is turned into a political issue which can cause a fight between MCA and Gerakan, then cracks will appear," he told reporters after chairing the Penang Umno meeting at the Tasek Gelugor Umno headquarters near here.

In the Penang State Assembly on Thursday, BN members Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) abstained from voting on a DAP motion seeking a deferment of the Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project.

The motion, tabled by Batu Lanchang state assemblyman Law Heng Kiang, was rejected after 19 BN representatives voted against it.

"I believe the leaderships of MCA and Gerakan as well as Umno in Penang do not want to see this (appearance of cracks in state BN)," he said.

Abdullah, who earlier chaired the Tasek Gelugor Umno Committee meeting, said the controversy was one issue which could cause problems in ties in the BN, especially between MCA and Gerakan in the state.

Abdullah said Penang Umno would not make any statements on the matter.

The Penang BN would submit a report to BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his attention and any action deemed fit, he said.

Abdullah said the Umno meetings discussed activities for the fasting month, including the giving of aid to the less fortunate, and the coming Hari Raya celebrations.

"We feel there should be less politics during this period but more welfare work and activities to help the needy," he said.

He said they also discussed the preparedness of the party machinery to face the next general election and the updating of the electoral roll.

-- BERNAMA

AHM YBY