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Abdullah-Umno

NO NEED TO BLOW UP ISSUE OF SUCCESSOR TO DPM POST

PUTRAJAYA, July 5 (Bernama) -- There is no need to blow up the issue of who will be the next deputy prime minister after the change in the country's leadership in October next year, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"This issue need not be blown up now because we have to continue working together and it will be another 16 months before I take over as the party and government leader," he told reporters after receiving a call from South Korean Construction and Transport Minister Lim In-Taik at his office, here.

He said that for now, Umno and its leaders must concentrate on enhancing cooperation among themselves.

"A decision on the matter cannot be avoided but the right honourable prime minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) is still here, the party leaders are still here and I have my tasks and the (Umno) vice-presidents have theirs.

"A decision will be made but the cooperation must continue... we must remain as friends," he said when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement on Tuesday that Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak may be become the deputy prime minister.

Dr Mahathir, at a meeting with the Kubang Pasu Umno division committee members, had said: "Actually, if I'm no longer prime minister, today Pak Lah (Abdullah) will be prime minister and maybe Najib will be deputy prime minister but they are prepared to wait 16 months for the posts."

Abdullah, when asked about the formula for the transition of power, said the main issue that everyone must understand was that cooperation among the Umno leaders must continue to be good and must be preserved at all times.

He said the party's wishes must take priority over that of the individual because it would make Umno better and stronger.

"If we prioritise the wishes of the party, the consensus among us will improve but if this objective is undermined by personal agenda, then the cooperation will be affected.

"We understand that if our party does not succeed in the elections, we will lose the opportunity to continue to serve the race, country and people. What gives Umno its success is political power and if that power is lost because of disputes, then no one wins," he said.

Abdullah, who is also Umno deputy president, said the formula for the transition as announced by Dr Mahathir would not affect Umno's chances to wrest the Pendang parliamentary and Anak Bukit state seats in the by-elections in Kedah on July 18.

"All Umno leaders and members understand that our strength hinges in our cooperation and unity. They understand that if the party is in disarray, our performance in the elections will be affected," he said.

Abdullah said the three Umno vice-presidents (Najib, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib) had made good contributions to the leadership and there were no disputes among them.

Asked about the Barisan Nasional's preparations for the two by-elections, he said they were proceeding smoothly and the chances of victory were bright.

-- BERNAMA

SR AFY MAI JK

