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Dr M: Abdullah has not reneged on naming deputy

PENANG, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had kept his word on the naming of his deputy before he becomes Prime Minister next October.

Dr Mahathir said Abdullah had said he would announce his deputy after the two by-elections in Kedah last month.

"Well, today is still `after the by-elections'. Even after a year or more, it will still be after the by-elections.

"In fact, he did not say when or after how many days or months. He has not reneged on his word," Dr Mahathir said in response to a question from a Japanese journalist who had earlier asked Abdullah on the same matter.

Dr Mahathir was here to attend a luncheon in honour of eight pioneer multi-national companies and 12 small and medium industries.

Present were Abdullah and Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

The journalist had posed the question to Abdullah but the Deputy Prime Minister reminded him that the news conference was being conducted by Dr Mahathir.

Asked to comment on Parti Keadilan Nasional's support for Pas' hudud, Dr Mahathir said the opposition party had done so to win votes.

"The party does not understand what hudud is all about and this is why it supported Pas and its brand of politics. The party is now a tool of Pas," he said.

Asked to comment on concerns raised by several Penang Umno leaders and the Malay community that they had been sidelined from mainstream economic activities by the State Government, he said the Government was aware of the complaints and taking steps to improve their lot.

He also advised all quarters to study the matter logically and calmly. "We will identify the problems and solve them.