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Abdullah-Kelantan

SO-CALLED CRISIS IN KELANTAN UMNO SETTLED, SAYS ABDULLAH

JELI, April 5 (Bernama) -- The much-talked about crisis brewing in Kelantan Umno has been settled, with Datuk Mustapa Mohamed retained as the State Umno liaison chief, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

The Deputy Prime Minister said his investigations showed the report that 12 of the 14 Umno division heads in Kelantan wanted Mustapa replaced as the State Umno head was not true.

The issue surfaced from rumours floated by Umno's enemies, said Abdullah, who is also Umno deputy president.

"I suggest it is best for Kelantan Umno to forget about the whole episode. Let the ongoing divisional Umno meetings pass resolutions supporting the leadership of Datuk Mustapa who has expressed his willingness to continue leading Kelantan Umno.

"With the move, Kelantan Umno will be seen to be really united and was solidly behind its leader. This will put a stop to speculations from cropping up," he told reporters here.

Abdullah said rumours on negative stories about Kelantan Umno could mar the good name of the State Umno and PAS could exploit them for its political mileage to continue clinging on to power in the state.

Abdullah said PAS would do anything to see Umno leaders at logger-heads as its aim was to erode the party's influence in Kelantan.

Kelantan Umno was abuzz last week when the New Straits Times published a front-page report that 12 of the 14 division chiefs in the state had agreed to topple five office bearers in Kelantan Umno led by Mustapa as they were said to be ineffective in Umno's efforts to wrest the state from PAS in the next general election.

Abdullah urged State Umno leaders and members to cooperate and refrain from involving in rumour-mongering to prevent such stories from resurfacing.

"If we want to achieve Umno's goal to win in the next general election, we need to stop speculations and spreading rumours which would only weaken our party. If we assist in spreading rumours, the rumours will be stronger and worsen the situation. Everything is up to us," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister also drew reference to rumours involving former Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa who is assisting the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) in the misappropriation of funds in the Hardcore Poor Development Programme.

"I also hope stories about Datuk Annuar Musa will not be blown up. I've heard all sorts of things, some said he has been arrested, his house has been repossessed and so on.

"These are all stories concocted by people who hate him, especially from PAS," he said.

Abdullah said PAS was taking advantage of reports on Annuar, including making baseless assumptions about him as the matter was still under investigations.

"Actually, Annuar is receptive to the investigations. In fact, he has informed Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) that he accepted the investigations in good faith to respect the country's laws," he said.

Earlier, opening the Jeli Umno division delegates meeting, Abdullah explained in detail the issue about Mustapa who is also Jeli division head.

He said the issue cropped up when division chiefs started to discuss to find a suitable candidate to succeed Mustapa following talk that he was

going to quit his post due to heavy work commitments at federal level.

He said when Mustapa was asked about it for confirmation, he denied that he would resign but instead expressed his preparedness to continue leading Kelantan Umno.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir, who was informed about the matter on Wednesday, gave his blessings to Mustapa to continue heading Kelantan Umno based on his excellent personal record.

"Actually, there was no intention among division chiefs or any groups in the party to oust the present Kelantan Umno leadership.

"In fact, if Datuk Mustapa remained as the State Umno chief, nobody will replace him," he said to a loud applause from delegates.

Abdullah advised Umno members to take the cue from the issue to close ranks to prevent any misunderstanding besides being cautious against the rumour mill, some of which were spread by Umno members themselves to the extent of tarnishing the party's image.

Besides Mustapa, several Umno division heads, including Annuar, who is Peringat division chief, and federal department heads were present at the meeting.

After opening the meeting, Abdullah met the division heads and their representatives to discuss latest developments in Kelantan Umno.

-- BERNAMA

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