

20 JUN 2003

Abdullah-Deputy

ABDULLAH TO ANNOUNCE HIS DEPUTY AFTER HE ASSUMES PREMIERSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, June 20 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who succeeds Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he steps down as prime minister in October, said today that he will only announce his deputy when he assumes office.

"Whatever announcement that I'm going to make on this subject on who's going to be my deputy will only be done when I assume the post of prime minister," he told reporters after a meeting with foreign political observers attending the 54th Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

"Sometime in October I think... no, no, not in October because Dr Mahathir will still be around. So, it has to be, it must be in November of course," he said.

Asked if he would possibly announce his deputy sooner, Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president, said: "Let's wait, I haven't assumed the post of PM."

On whether he would name his deputy before or after the next general election, he said that the date of the general election has yet to be decided.

Abdullah, who was also asked as to who he has in his mind to be his deputy, said: "If I tell you now, it's as good as announcing (it)."

Asked on firmer action to be taken in his mind to face threats confronting the party, Abdullah said that it was most vital that Umno members ensure solid unity within the party.

"There ought to be unity in purpose and we must ensure the struggle of the party. Only in this way will we gather the strength to face whatever challenges," he said.

Commenting on the proposal by several delegates that the leadership resort to expulsion in dealing with those presenting threats to the party, Abdullah said that members guilty of indiscipline, undermining the party and colluding with the enemy against Umno would certainly face action.

"Certainly disciplinary action has to be taken and the most appropriate is expulsion," he said.

On his meeting with the 70 foreign political observers representing 26 political parties from 21 countries, Abdullah said that they had expressed their wish to expand on the cooperation between Umno and their respective parties.

The deputy prime minister said that he had taken the opportunity during the hour-long meeting to convey to them that Malaysia was certainly very happy to also enhance cooperation with the respective governments.

"When the transition of power takes place, when I take over, I'll continue with the cooperation which has long existed and also enhance bilateral cooperation with their governments," he said.

Abdullah said that he would boost such efforts for mutual benefit.

-- BERNAMA

HS HS RON RM