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Abdullah Ahmad-Support

FORMER NST GROUP EDITOR-IN-CHIEF PLEDGES SUPPORT

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 24 (Bernama) -- Former group editor-in-chief of the "New Straits Times" (NST), Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad, today sent a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi pledging his continued support for his leadership, the UMNO and the Government.

The veteran journalist was asked to withdraw from his post on Nov 20, after his weekly "On the Record" column on Nov 19 caused strained relations with Saudi Arabia.

He told BERNAMA that he accepted "unreservedly" the Prime Minister's comment on Nov 22 that the decision was not personal but was made by the management of the New Straits Times Press after Wisma Putra received protests from the Saudi Arabian Government.

Abdullah said he met UMNO Secretary-General Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaacob over the weekend.

"He explained to me why the action had to be taken in the national interest and I accepted his explanation and assured him that I would continue to be an UMNO member and support the party under the leadership of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi," he said. "Nothing has changed because of the sacking."

Abdullah was cheerful and said he would now have more time to spend with his wife, three children and two grandchildren.

He is considering completing his PhD on Kelantan politics from 1900 to 1990 at the University of Malaya.

He had taken a leave of absence from the university in 1996 when he was appointed Malaysia's Special Envoy to the United Nations.

Abdullah first joined the NST as a reporter in 1957 but left later for a career in politics. He became its Executive Director in 2000 and Group Editor-in-Chief in 2001.

He joined UMNO in 1963 when he became Political Secretary to the then Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein.

"If not for my tutelage under Tun Razak, who gave me my first start, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who continued, and my friendship with Datuk Seri Adullah Ahmad Badawi, when he was Deputy Prime Minister and now Prime Minister, I wouldn't have come this far," he said.

He said he may write books based on his PhD thesis, his time with Tun Razak and his experiences at the UN.

"But nothing about present politics," he quipped. "I'm taking leave."

-- BERNAMA

SOM KHY SRI