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Tajol-DPM

TAJOL WANTS UMNO DIVISIONS NOT TO DISCUSS DPM QUESTION

IPOH, April 9 (Bernama) -- Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali today asked all Umno divisions in the state to concentrate on preparations for the General Election and not dwell on the question of who will be appointed the new Deputy Prime Minister.

He said it would be unwise to discuss matters which could lead to disunity as the party focused on strengthening its General Election machinery.

"I am advising Umno leaders in Perak to patiently wait for Datuk Seri Abdullah Haji Badawi to appoint his deputy once he himself had become the Prime Minister," he said after chairing the Perak State Executive Council meeting here.

He was commenting on the support expressed by Chenderoh Umno Division head Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz for Umno Vice President Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to be appointed the Deputy Prime Minister once Abdullah becomes Prime Minister this October.

Mohamed Nazri yesterday explained that he was only expressing his personal view and it was not a resolution adopted by the division.

Tajol Rosli, who is Perak Umno Chief, said all party leaders and members were aware that appointing a Deputy Prime Minister was the prerogative of the Prime Minister while a choosing a deputy president for Umno was left with the members.

The Umno elections would only be held after the General Election and whether a Deputy Prime Minister would be named before or after that, rested with Abdullah.

"We will support whoever is appointed. However if a Deputy Prime Minister is named before the Umno elections, usually Umno members will choose the same person as party deputy president," added Tajol Rosli.

In JOHOR BAHRU, Johor Umno supported the stand of the Acting Prime Minister that the naming of a Deputy Prime Minister had always been the prerogative of the Prime Minister who would make the announcement at an appropriate time.

Johor Umno Chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said this had been the practice since the time of the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra-Al Haj.

"This has been the practice and it should be preserved," said Abdul Ghani who is Johor Menteri Besar, after chairing the Johor State Executive Council meeting.

He pointed out that the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had chosen Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the Deputy Prime Minister.

"Dr Mahathir has also named Datuk Seri Abdullah as his successor and therefore Johor Umno agreed with the stand adopted by Datuk Seri Abdullah that when the time came for him to take over as Prime Minister, he would appoint a deputy," he said.

Abdul Ghani said Johor Umno felt that no one should act outside of the party practices.

"We in Johor Umno...all divisions... agree to what Datuk Seri Abdullah had said and we support his stand," he said.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Terengganu Umno Youth head Haji Din Adam said it was the Prime Minister's prerogative to appoint his deputy.

Hence he expressed the hope no branch or division would adopt resolutions expressing support for any particular leader to be appointed

Deputy Prime Minister.

Haji Din said it was Datuk Seri Abdullah's right to appoint whomsoever he pleased as Deputy Prime Minister and no one should question his right.

The focus should now be on preparing for the General Election, he said.

Terengganu Puteri Umno Chief Nordiana Shafei said party members and leaders should not interfere in the appointment of a new Deputy Prime Minister as this would divert the party's focus on other things such as the general election.

"We in Terengganu should concentrate on efforts to remove PAS from power in the coming election. The question of appointing a Deputy Prime Minister should be left to Abdullah," she said.

Barisan Nasional Assemblyman for Kemasik, Terengganu, Datuk Abu Bakar Ali echoed Nordiana's views and said the focus should now be on preparing for the General Election.

In PENANG, State Deputy Umno Chief Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said Umno members should respect Datuk Seri Abdullah's right to decide who should be his deputy when he became Prime Minister.

In line with the usual practice it should be Abdullah's right to appoint the new Deputy Prime Minister.

"We should not discuss the matter but should leave it to Pak Lah to name the Deputy Prime Minister. Surely he will have his own view as to the person most suitable for the job," he said.

He urged all party members in Penang not to raise the issue and abide by the decision made by the party leadership.

Penang Wanita Umno Chief Datuk Sharifah Aminah Syed Mohamad said Umno members should concentrate on securing the party's victory in the General Election and not speculate on who would be appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

She noted that the most number of votes obtained by the vice president in the party polls did not become a criterion in the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister.

"If Abdullah feels that an ordinary member of the Umno Supreme Council is qualified to be appointed to the post, so be it. Let the party president decide on it and we as members should prepare for the General Election."

As is publicly known, the General Election would be held before the Umno election and so members need not name anyone to the post, added Sharifah.

In KUANTAN, State Umno Youth Chief Ismail Mohd Said said Umno members need not dispute Abdullah's choice of a Deputy Prime Minister as it was the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

He said the party's main agenda now was to focus on the General Election.

"Pahang Umno Youth fully supports whoever is appointed Deputy Prime Minister by Abdullah as this is vital for the continuation of the party struggle and national development," he said.

However Pahang Wanita Umno Chief Datuk Maznah Mazlan and the Pahang Puteri Umno head Shahaniza Shamsuddin declined comment on the matter.

In KOTA BAHARU, Kelantan Umno deputy head Zaid Ibrahim said the task of naming a new Deputy Prime Minister should be left to the next Prime Minister -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"Now we still have Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as our Prime Minister ...wait for Pak Lah to become Prime Minister first," he said.

Hence the question of who should occupy the number two post should not be discussed now.

Any action to name someone publicly for the post at this juncture would invite problems and could be misinterpreted, he said.

In BANTING, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo said choosing a new Deputy Prime Minister should be left to the new Prime

Minister.

It would not be nice for Umno members to discuss possible candidates for the number two post, he said after chairing the State Executive Council meeting in Banting.

He said divisions or branches should not endorse anyone for the post as it would give the impression that there was a race for the number two post in the government.

Dr Mohamad Khir said no division should nominate or endorse any leader for the post of Deputy Prime Minister to preserve the spirit of brotherhood within the party.

"We are worried that if the move to endorse candidates for the post goes on it will cause disunity in the party," he said.

Meanwhile Umno Vice President Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has said that Umno should concentrate on preparing for the General Election and not be sidetracked by unnecessary issues.

He said the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister should not be raised as advised by the Acting Umno President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"It is best that the issue is not raised...acting party President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's advice should be respected and implemented," said Muhyiddin who is Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs to reporters.

"We have to abide by Abdullah's advice...it is very clear...solid. It has been made with good intention to avoid giving rise to any unnecessary situation in Umno politics," Muhyiddin said.

The issue came to the fore when Chenderoh Umno Division head Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz expressed his personal view that Umno Vice President Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak should be appointed Deputy Umno President and also Deputy Prime Minister this October.

Abdullah when commenting on the matter had advised all Umno divisions not to adopt any resolution endorsing anyone for the post of Deputy Prime Minister.

Muhyiddin said the leadership decided not to hold branch and divisional elections so as to focus on preparations for the General Election.

"The party should always be on top of the situation...do not create new issues that can shift the focus from the main agenda," Muhyiddin said.

-- BERNAMA

MAS KAT AZZ AAM