

07 APR 2003

Abdullah-Deputy

UMNO DIVISIONS ADVISED NOT TO MAKE ANY MOTION ON DPM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today advised all Umno divisions not to make any motion on who should be his deputy when he takes over as prime minister.

The acting prime minister said that such motions could result in campaigning for certain posts within the party.

"There's no need for such motions by any division now because firstly, (Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that I will decide who will be the deputy prime minister.

"Secondly, the party has agreed that there will be no elections until after the next general election and this factor should be given attention by the divisions," he told a media conference in the Parliament lobby after tabling two motions on the redelineation of electoral boundaries in the Dewan Rakyat.

Abdullah was asked to comment on the support expressed by the Chenderoh Umno division in Perak yesterday for Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to be elevated to deputy president and appointed deputy prime minister in October.

Chenderoh Umno division chairman Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz had said that his division felt that Najib was the most qualified to become the deputy prime minister as he was one of the longest-serving cabinet ministers and had contributed a lot to national development.

Abdullah, who is also Umno deputy president, said that if a division started making motions the others might follow suit and this could cause trouble.

He said that it was better for the divisions not to submit the names of their candidates.

"Anything to do with posts can be raised and motions passed later when we have the party elections.

"On the choice of deputy prime minister, give me a chance to consider a suitable candidate," he said.

To a question on internal conflicts within Barisan Nasional component parties, such as bickerings in the Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP), MIC and MCA, Abdullah said that such disputes should stop.

"The prime minister has said it already and I have also made statements previously at the Barisan Nasional meeting.

"I've reminded them that it is important to ensure that our party remains strong and if there is any problem between the parties, then we have to resolve it as quickly as possible and we must avoid intra-party dispute," he said.

He said that they were all responsible leaders and he believed that they would not go to the extent of jeopardising the Barisan Nasional's chances of winning the next general election.

To a question from a foreign journalist on the arrest of Parti Keadilan Nasional members under the Internal Security Act (ISA), Abdullah said that they were arrested under the ISA not because they were Keadilan members or that they belonged to any particular opposition party.

"We detained them because of what they have done... they have gone against the law and certain things and we consider that it would be appropriate for them to be detained under the ISA," he said.

After the media conference, Abdullah was surrounded by the ISA detainees' wives who gave him a souvenir book and asked why their husbands

were still held under the ISA.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, politely told them to be patient.

-- BERNAMA

HS HS JK