

04 MAR 2004

Abdullah-Candidates

ABDULLAH WANTS UMNO MEMBERS TO ACCEPT CANDIDATES CHOSEN BY LEADERSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 (Bernama) -- Umno members must make their desire to let the top leadership decide on the party's candidates for the coming general election a reality, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today.

He said they should not take action which was detrimental to the party if they were not selected as candidates.

"Don't say leave it to the leadership but (at the same time saying) nominate me, how can this be, if you leave it to the leadership, then let it be so.

"Subsequently, if the leader selects anyone, accept the decision, because this is what we want," he said after chairing the Barisan Nasional (BN) Supreme Council meeting and the Umno Supreme Council meeting at Menara Dato Onn, Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), here today.

Parliament was dissolved today to enable the 11th general election within 60 days.

Abdullah, who is acting Umno president and BN chairman, said Umno members must accept the fact that it was the party that was contesting while the candidates were merely its agents.

"I too went through this process for many years, I was decided by the top leadership too.

"I did not know then whether I would be contesting or not, but fortunately it can be said that I had contested in every general election," he said.

This will be the first time Abdullah is leading the BN in the general election since assuming the post of Prime Minister from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Oct 31, last year.

Abdullah admitted that there were people who reminded him to be careful over the selection of Umno candidates as this usually posed problems.

"For those who are expecting something, it's natural if you are dissappointed (if you ara not chosen) but you should be able to control yourself," he said.

He said they should not allow their frustration to lead them into doing things which would weaken the party and create factions.

Asked about cabinet ministers who had expressed the desire to retire, Abdullah said: "Alhamdullilah".

Asked about the number of ministers involved, he replied: "You said there were just now, I was about to ask who."

However, he said he would not stop anyone who wished to retire.

"If they feel it's time to retire because they have served a long time or are unwell, we say thank you to them," he said.

Abdullah said there were those who had informed him about their intention but declined to elaborate.

Asked on the number of Menteris Besar who would be standing for Parliamentary seats, Abdullah said: "Don't know yet."

Earlier, he said Umno candidates would be announced a day before nomination day.

-- BERNAMA
JM AZZ AO