

15 JAN 2004
Abdullah-BN
NAJIB IS BN DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) Supreme Council decided unanimously at its meeting today to appoint Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak as BN deputy chairman.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is BN chairman, told a media conference after the meeting here that Najib had also been appointed as chairman of the BN Management Committee.

Abdullah also said that Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat who had stepped down with immediate effect as BN secretary-general would be succeeded by Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob who is Umno secretary-general.

Abdullah would also take over the post of treasurer from former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is former BN chairman and was acting in that post.

He said that the meeting also approved the list of BN divisional chairmen proposed to the Supreme Council by the respective states.

The Prime Minister also said that the BN component parties had been directed to ensure continuous cooperation and to strengthen their respective parties in facing the coming general election.

"We know that we have to work hard in facing the (general) election," he said.

Asked whether he has had any inspiration on when to call for the election, Abdullah said: "No inspiration yet."

He said that the meeting had not discussed the allocation of seats among the BN component parties in view of the additional parliamentary and state seats created following the redelineation of the electoral boundary in facing the general election.

Asked on the position of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) which had been deregistered by the Registrar of Societies (ROS) following a leadership crisis, Abdullah said that the decision had been made by the ROS and he had been informed that the ROS had received a letter of appeal from the party.

Later, when asked to comment on his appointment as BN deputy chairman, Najib said that he was grateful to Abdullah and the leaders of the component parties for their trust in him.

"I noted the very encouraging spirit of the BN...united, strong and prepared to deal with whatever challenges in facing the (coming general) election," he said.

On his duties and functions, Najib said that he would discuss with Abdullah on the priorities of his new responsibility.

"But certainly they will revolve around the preparations of the component parties to ensure a convincing victory in the general election," said Najib who was appointed Deputy Prime Minister on Jan 7.

Meanwhile, Mohamed, when met by reporters, declined to elaborate on his decision to step down. "I'm not saying anything more today. I'll call for a press conference next week," he said.

"I'm happy to go," said the former Information Minister and Umno secretary general who took over the post of BN secretary general from former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba on March 22 1994.

Asked what he was going to do now, Mohamed said: "I'm a party man, I'll be around."

-- BERNAMA
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