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Abdullah: Najib to assume responsibility as Umno deputy chief

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak will assume the responsibilities of deputy president with immediate effect, said acting president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today.

The Prime Minister said the newly-appointed Deputy Prime Minister's responsibilities would include chairing the party's management committee.

This was decided by the Umno management committee during its meeting chaired by Abdullah earlier today and endorsed by the supreme council which met later.

Abdullah said the appointment was a normal procedure and he, too, had gone through the same process previously.

"When I was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in January 1999, the supreme council asked me to assume the responsibilities of the deputy president until the next party election.

"Najib will go through the same process," said Abdullah after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Najib was appointed the Deputy Prime Minister on Wednesday.

Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president, has been acting president since Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepped down as Prime Minister and party president in October last year.

Under the Umno constitution, there is no provision for the appointment of an acting deputy president. Clause 9.9 provides that when the party president resigns, his deputy will become the acting president until the next general assembly when a new president is elected.

Abdullah also said vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin would be appointed as its representative in the Barisan Nasional supreme council to fill the quota for Umno following the retirement of Dr Mahathir in October last year.

Umno's other representatives in the BN supreme council are Najib and another vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

Asked whether Najib would also be appointed as BN deputy chairman, Abdullah said: "That will be decided by the BN."

The BN supreme council is scheduled to hold its meeting on Jan 15.

Abdullah said during today's supreme council meeting, he had briefed party leaders on Najib's appointment as Deputy Prime Minister and the Cabinet reshuffle.

"The supreme council passed a resolution to support Najib's appointment and the Cabinet reshuffle. Najib pledged to work together and co-operate with me and all the party leaders and members."

Abdullah said he had also briefed the supreme council members on his one-day visit to Indonesia yesterday and his scheduled visit to Singapore on Monday.

"We need to foster the existing good ties with leaders of all other countries, especially those in Asean. It is important to maintain existing ties."

He added that more talks were needed to enhance ties.