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`Nominations should not be regarded as endorsements'

By Jason Gerald

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - Umno divisions, including Kepala Batas and Pekan, can nominate whom they wish for party posts at the party election in September, but such nominations should not be regarded as an endorsement by the leadership.

Prime Minister and acting Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today that under the party's constitution, Umno divisions holding their delegates' meetings between July 8 and 22 should also make nominations for all three vice-president posts and the 25 Umno Supreme Council posts.

"As far as I know, the divisions cannot refrain from making nominations. Secondly, when making nominations, they must be made in full," he said.

"For instance, we have three vice-presidents, we cannot nominate just one. We must make nominations for all three."

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of agreement here between DRB-Hicom Defence Technologies Sdn Bhd and Agusta S.P.A of Italy on the marketing and sale of Agusta helicopters in Malaysia and the region.

He was commenting on reports that the Kepala Batas Umno division, headed by himself, and the Pekan division, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, might not submit nominations for the party's posts as they might be seen as endorsements of those candidates by the top leadership.

Abdullah said it was not the two divisions that would decide who should have the posts, but the delegates at the Umno general assembly.

Najib had on Tuesday said the nominations by the two divisions might influence delegates, and certain leaders might also be offended by what could be misconstrued as the endorsement of the party's top leaders.

"We have not decided yet," Najib said. "There are views (for both divisions) to be neutral, but I have also yet to discuss this with the acting party president."

Abdullah said he understood why Najib felt that way, but added: "We allow the delegates from all divisions the freedom to elect the right people for the posts at the general assembly."

Abdullah added that as Kepala Batas Umno chief, he had never tabled a motion on who should be appointed or chosen for Umno posts.

"I have to discuss the issue with Najib. At the same time I have to ask my division as well. In Umno, decisions are made through consensus," he said.

Umno will hold its election at its general assembly from Sept 22 to 24.

Asked on his proposal for a new law enabling citizens to arrest felons such as snatch thieves, Abdullah said he did not have details but the proposal was aimed at empowering the people to carry out their responsibilities within the jurisdiction of the law.

"The Attorney-General's chambers will study all aspects and issues."

On the call by former Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad for a review of the annual RM10,000 honorarium paid by Penang to Kedah, Abdullah said the matter would have to be referred to the Penang State Government.

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