

10/10/2003

Abdullah: Barisan out to win big at the polls

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today he was looking forward to leading the Barisan Nasional to a big win in the general election.

Abdullah said the BN is now much stronger than during the 1999 general election.

"Leading the BN into the next general election is something which I cannot avoid, and I want to make sure that we do well ...the party machinery must be in top form.

"I believe we will do better in the next general election compared to 1999 but again we should not be over confident," he told a Press conference after opening the three-day BN Youth workshop to prepare them for the election.

Around 2,000 Youth members of the BN component parties attended the workshop held simultaneously at 10 locations in the country.

BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat and BN Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein were present.

Abdullah, also the BN deputy chairman and Umno deputy president, was asked to comment on the coalition's preparations for the general election, which must be held by November next year.

Asked if the election would be held this year, Abdullah replied: "I cannot say accurately when the election will be held."

Then pointing to the BN secretary-general, he said: "Mohamed says he has yet to dream on when to advise me to hold the election."

Asked if this was his last meeting with the BN Youth prior to the election, Abdullah said: "No. I will meet them again. This is just the beginning of many more things to come."

Abdullah said the BN Youth have assured him that they will work hard to ensure the coalition's victory.

On the statement yesterday by Pas information chief Datuk Dr Haron Din that the votes in Kedah would swing to Pas as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is not defending his Kubang Pasu seat, Abdullah said he did not think so.

"The BN leaders in Kubang Pasu will work hard as they want to make sure we retain the seat. Although Dr Mahathir has announced his resignation he is still an Umno member, and he has assured us that he is willing to campaign for the party.

"Although Dr Mahathir will no longer be around, the party must carry on with its struggles and we must not let it die," he added.