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Abdullah confident Umno veeps will keep their word

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today reiterated that he had no doubts that the Umno vice-presidents would keep their promise not to contest for the post of Umno deputy president.

"They are good and honourable people," he said of Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muamad Taib.

"They have made the promise in front of so many ... thousands clapped when they said it, of course they will not go back on their word," he said.

Abdullah said this in response to reports that Umno divisional leaders had raised fears that the vice-presidents might change their minds and eventually contest the post of deputy president of the party.

"They are sincere people, I have no doubt about what they have said publicly about their stand.

"I have no doubts because they understand the need for such a stand (the decision not to contest) to be made public and that it is good for the party. I ask Umno members not to be suspicious of them.

"If you want to be suspicious, it can go on forever but give them a chance and treat them as leaders with integrity who want only the best for the party," he said.

Asked about the situation in 1993 when then vice-president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he would not challenge the incumbent deputy president Tun Ghafar Baba but eventually did, Abdullah said: "That is Anwar."

Asked if someone other than the two vice-presidents would contest, Abdullah said only that there should be no speculation.

Asked if he was feeling the pressure of naming a deputy, Abdullah said there was not much pressure.

On whether he would seek the advice and help of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the next general election, he said he did not need to make a public statement on the issue.

"I have told Umno members that the PM will continue to be a member of the party and wants to do whatever he can to help Umno and its leadership. It is a stand that Umno deeply appreciates," he said.