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Abdullah: Umno out to recapture Kelantan from Pas in next election

PASIR PUTIH, Fri. - Umno has never abandoned Kelantan and hopes to recapture it from Pas in the next general election, deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and I have never given up hope of Umno wresting the State from Pas," he added.

Abdullah, who is acting Prime Minister, said Umno's national leaders would never leave the state leaders in the lurch.

He said the mood in Kelantan had changed and the people were favouring Umno but the biggest challenge would be to keep the momentum going until the next election.

"The question is whether this positive change is sustainable. We hope this will continue until the crucial time, which is the general election," he said after opening the Kelantan Women's Patriotism Gathering.

Present were State Umno chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Wanita Umno chief Senator Datin Nik Azizah Nik Yahaya.

Abdullah said it was important that the party machinery improve its canvassing capability.

He said Kelantan Umno members should draw lessons from the defeat in previous general elections.

"If we do not value the experience, then we stand to be defeated," he said when asked whether Kelantan Umno leaders and members were still disunited.

"Stop bringing ailments that can be detrimental to our efforts to win back the State."

On the State Umno's proposal to name its election candidates early, he said he was leaving it to Mustapa.

"The party leadership has not discussed it but we will have the final say," said Abdullah, who is also chairman of the Umno management committee.

He said the announcement that Mustapa would become Menteri Besar if Umno won was a signal to the people that Umno was willing to make changes, including the injection of new blood.

"The response has been good. The announcement was not met with jeers from members," he said.

He said further changes after this would depend on an evaluation of the situation by the State liaison committee.

On whether Umno would allow a candidate to contest for state and parliamentary seats to pave the way for Mustapa to become Menteri Besar, he said it was a strategy that would not be discussed in public.

Earlier, he said hardwork, resilience, efficiency and co-operation were needed for Umno to capture Kelantan.