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'I will name No 2 in November' (HL)

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today he will name his deputy after he takes over as Prime Minister from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, most likely in November.

"Please wait ... I have not assumed the post. Any announcement will come after I become the Prime Minister, probably in November," he said.

Asked if he would possibly announce his deputy sooner, Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president, said: "Let's wait, I haven't assumed the post of PM yet."

On whether he would name his deputy before or after the next general election, he said the date of the general election had yet to be decided.

Abdullah, who was also asked as to who he had in mind to be his deputy, said: "If I tell you now, it's as good as announcing (it)."

On the declaration of support of Umno members for him to take over at the party's helm, Abdullah said he believed it was genuine.

The Deputy Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after a meeting with representatives of foreign political parties attending the 54th Umno general assembly as observers.

On the threats coming from within the party as emphasised by Dr Mahathir in his speech when opening the assembly yesterday, Abdullah said the problem could be checked if there was strong unity among members.

"We must have one intention and objective to ensure that the party struggle is imbued by all. Only with this will we have the strength to face whatever challenges and obstacles from any quarters," he said.

Abdullah said disciplinary action, including dismissal, would be taken against members who committed any act detrimental to the party or worked hand in glove with others to frustrate Umno.

On his meeting with 70 representatives of 26 political parties from 21 countries, he said the delegation had expressed their desire to continue co-operating with Umno even after the transition of power.

"I have given them my assurance that when I become the Prime Minister, I will continue with the co-operation in addition to the bilateral co-operation with their respective Governments," he said.

"I will strive for closer ties for common benefit."

Dr Mahathir has named Abdullah as his successor and had made references to Datuk Seri Najib Razak as the possible next Deputy Prime Minister. Najib is one of the three party vice-presidents. The other two are Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

In clear running for the DPM's post are Najib and Muhyiddin. Abdullah, however, has not indicated his choice.

By convention, the Deputy Prime Minister is also the party deputy president.

Umno leaders have given their word that they will support the person Abdullah appoints as his successor.