

18/01/2003

Changes on the cards for Umno State liaison panels, says Abdullah

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PENANG, Fri. - Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today said there will be changes to all State Umno liaison committees as the party prepares for the general election.

He said this was inevitable as the dominant party in the ruling coalition strengthens itself and the Barisan Nasional.

"All State Umno liaison committee chairmen should be thinking of ways to strengthen the party to enable it to continue fighting for religion, race and country.

"There is a great possibility that many States want these changes," Abdullah said when asked if the announcement of the new line-up in Kelantan Umno by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would pave the way for changes to other State Umno liaison committees.

Asked if there would be changes in the Terengganu Umno line-up, Abdullah, who chairs the State Umno liaison committee, said: "Yes, there will be."

Asked about his home State, Penang, of which he is also State Umno liaison committee chairman, Abdullah turned to Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya and said in jest:

"Ask him ... he is the State Umno liaison committee deputy chairman."

Pressed further, Abdullah said: "We should see some changes everywhere and this could be one of our objectives."

The Deputy Prime Minister was here to witness the completion of the RM5.5 million restoration work on the 201-year-old Masjid Kapitan Keling.

Present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Dr Hilmi, who is also Deputy Chief Minister, Tanjung Umno division chairman Datuk Ahmad Ibnihajar and Masjid Kapitan Keling mosque committee chairman Meera Mydin Mastan.

On the changes in Kelantan Umno, Abdullah said the new leaders should be given the support to enable them to garner greater strength for Umno and BN in the State, so that the BN could recapture it at the next general election.

He said Umno was constantly changing and promoting new talent and leaders to give them recognition as well as opportunities to contribute to the party's struggles.

Umno draws its strength from the combination of young and senior leaders, he added.

On Kelantan Umno, he said Umno members and leaders had given their support in the past and made way for Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, (Tan Sri) Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen (Tengku Ismail) and (Tan Sri) Mohamed Yaacob although they were young professionals then, to lead the party.

"The same also applied to (Datuk) Annuar Musa, (Datuk Paduka) Ibrahim Ali, Datuk Hashim Safin and others.

"Now that we have a new line-up, they also deserve support so that they can be as strong and can contribute to Kelantan Umno," he said.

Earlier, Abdullah said careful consideration should be given to all aspects before old buildings are renovated or restored.

"If they are rich in historical value and reflect the identity, strength and contributions of a community, then they should be restored for the benefit of future generations.

"The Masjid Kapitan Keling is certainly one of them as it glorifies the strength and contributions of Muslims in Penang in the 1800s," he said.

The mosque, built in 1801, is the most prominent historic mosque in Penang. It was named for the appointed heads of the south Indian community that thrived in the heart of George Town in the early 19th century.