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Columnist focuses on appointment of DPM

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AFTER the smooth transition of power from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the focus now is on the appointment of the new Deputy Prime Minister and when the general election will be held.

Mingguan Malaysia's Awang Selamat, writing in his weekly column Bisik-Bisik Mingguan, said he was confident Abdullah had already chosen his deputy.

"(But) When he is going to announce it, that's absolutely his right. It will be improper for anyone to pressure him on the matter."

If remarks by Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz were of any indication, Awang said he believed the appointment would be made soon, at least before the end of next month.

On the general election, Awang said many were looking at next year as the date.

"But it will be better if it is held this year. The atmosphere now is conducive for the nation to go to the polls."

The paper carried various articles on Dr Mahathir and Abdullah. One of the articles had royal professor Ungku Aziz speaking extensively on Abdullah and the ability of the new Prime Minister to overcome challenges.

In the news page, the paper reported the optimism of the Terengganu Malay Chamber of Commerce that the 30 per cent Bumiputera equity could be attained by 2010.

Its president Wan Mohd Albakri Wan Mohd Noor was quoted as saying the target could be achieved but all parties had to play their role and cooperate.

He said the upcoming listing of Felda would help push up Bumiputera equity which now stood at 18.7 per cent.

"In fact, the listing of other agencies like Felcra, Risda and Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera should also be considered."

Another measure that would help enlarge Bumiputera equity, he said, was the announcement in the MidTerm Review of the Eighth Malaysia Plan that 60 per cent of government contracts and procurements would be awarded to Bumiputera companies.

Besides news and special features on the country's fifth Prime Minister, Berita Minggu reported there was no proof that eating soya bean and lady's finger would make men more effeminate.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia professor Dr Fatimah Arshad disputed a study by Universiti Malaya linking soya bean and lady's finger to effeminate men.

"Soya bean-based food is good and rich in protein. They can be a substitute for fish, chicken, meat and egg."

The Universiti Malaya study said soya bean could increase the estrogen (secreted by the ovary and responsible for typical female sexual characteristics) level in men.