

21/04/2003

'Let party select candidates'

SEREMBAN, Sun. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today advised Umno election aspirants to leave candidate selection to the party leadership.

This is with regard to the new constituencies formed in the Election Commission's latest re-delineation exercise.

"My advice to them is leave it all to the leadership. We will discuss (potential candidates) with the State leaders before reaching any decision. Once a decision is made, we hope there won't be any problems."

Abdullah, who is acting Prime Minister and Umno deputy president, said it was not easy to make everyone happy.

"This is almost impossible but we must be able to accept the decisions made by the party leadership," he said after opening the Rasah Umno division meeting at Pusat Islam Paroi, near here, today.

Also present were State Umno liaison committee chief and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, who is also Jelebu MP and Jelebu Umno division chief, Rasah Umno chief Datuk Mohamad Hassan, Seremban Umno chief Datuk Ishak Ismail and State Wanita Umno chief Datuk Napsiah Omar.

In his speech, Abdullah emphasised the importance of astutely managing the party's success and strengths.

"If we do not manage our success carefully, we will lose track easily."

Abdullah said Umno's success and strength must not be abused for corruption or abuse of power.

"If we are ever involved in this, the people will be disappointed and we will not be given the chance again to rule the country."

On the application by former Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs) deputy president Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan to join Umno, Abdullah said it was his right to join Umno or any other party. "We will consider (his application)."

Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob confirmed that Jeffrey had submitted his application to Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur four days ago.

Jeffrey, younger brother of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, was an Independent State Assemblyman for Bingkor for several months after he was expelled by PBRs following a crisis in the party.

Jeffrey said he applied to join Umno because he believed it was the right choice.

On the motion by Pendang Umno division to retain Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Umno president after he steps down as Prime Minister in October, Abdullah said: "I know Pendang people, whom our PM has served."

The division passed the motion without debate at its annual general meeting yesterday.

Pendang Umno division head Datuk Othman Abdul said the resolution indicated the members' affection for the Prime Minister.