

PM: Bank acted on its own
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The government had no hand in instructing Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) to set conditions of compulsory bumiputera stake in legal firms that want to do business with the bank.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the bank, Malaysia's number one bank, had imposed the condition on its own.

"We did not issue such directive," Abdullah was quoted as saying by Bernama today.

"That is the bank's policy and we hope they will always be fair and just," he told reporters after officiating Umno's 61st anniversary celebration at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

Maybank came under fire from the Bar Council and several other quarters over its conditions requiring existing and newly selected panel of lawyers to have at least three partners, one of whom must be a bumiputera holding a minimum of 50 percent equity in the partnership.

The bank, in a statement last Friday, said the conditions were to take effect on July 1.

However, on Wednesday, the bank said it would revise its newly imposed guideline and continue to select solicitor firms based primarily on performance, efficiency and merit.

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had also reprimanded the government-linked company on Wednesday over its racial quota policy.

"The government's policy is that we want to encourage GLCs to give work to both bumiputera and non-bumiputera (companies)," he had said.

"It is unfortunate that sometimes people interpret it in their own way," added Najib then.

Umno's dominance

Meanwhile, on another matter, the prime minister urged Umno to continue its dominance in leading the country "even for the next 100 years".

"Umno will continue to be our perpetual struggle, as long as there are stars and the moon in the sky and the earth beneath us.

"Umno will be there as long as the Malay race exists," Abdullah was quoted as saying in another Bernama report.

The party president said members should stay united in order to be the sole champion of the Malays.

"Umno is an inheritance of the race that cannot be neglected. It's our duty to ensure that the generation that takes over gets a strong, firm and successful Umno," he said, to applause from the 3,000-odd people present at Dewan Merdeka.

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