

BN still looking for suitable candidate
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Barisan Nasional has not decided on its candidate for the Permatang Pauh by-election, said the coalition's chairperson and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today.

abdullah ahmad badawi pm anti inflation pc 090608Abdullah said that they had not found a suitable candidate yet and needed to hold discussions with party leaders in the constituency first before making a decision.

Asked to describe the characteristics that the BN was looking for in a candidate, Abdullah replied the candidate must be "courteous and able to gain trust from the voters".

The Permatang Pauh Umno division yesterday had proposed its chief Abdul Jalil Abdul Majid as a possible candidate.

Abdul Jalil himself had told the media that he was very confident of defeating PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim in the Aug 26 by-election.

'It is nice to be the underdogs'

Asked to comment on suggestions by several Umno leaders that the BN should not participate in the by-election, Abdullah said that this was not the coalition's practice.

He said that BN would definitely contest in the by-election as it would never give a walkover for the opposition.

"BN will not do that," he said.

"We have never heard of an Umno (member) saying that we should boycott the by-election, or from BN component parties. Never in our history have we ever stayed away from a by-election," he added.

He was speaking to reporters after a two-hour BN Supreme Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur, which he chaired.

He said that he may also participate in the by-election campaign and that he would uphold the role as the party leader.

"God willing, I would participate in the campaign. Like all by-elections, it would be headed by the deputy BN chief and this does not mean that the party leader would not take part. Everyone will help," he stressed.

The prime minister was also quizzed on many political observers' conclusion that the BN was the underdogs in this by-election, to which Abdullah played down the matter.

"Sometimes, it is nice to be the underdogs," he replied with a smile.

SAPP decision delayed

Abdullah also said that the Barisan management committee had yet to decide on the fate of rebel component party Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP).

He said that the committee had to study the Sabah-based party's reply to a show cause letter that was issued last month after the small party had called for a vote of no-confidence against the prime minister.

Deputy Barisan chief Najib Abdul Razak, who was also at the press conference, stressed that the coalition was not purposely delaying or avoiding the matter.

"We will only come to a decision after carefully studying the reply. It does not mean that we are purposely delaying the matter or no decision had been made," added Najib.

Barisan secretary-general Tengku Adnan Mansur told reporters later that a final decision would likely be made after the Permatang Pauh by-election.

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