

Penang Umno sticks by Abdullah
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Penang Umno today defended beleaguered party president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and wants divisions nationwide

not to rock the boat and honour the 2010 power transition plan.

Penang Umno liaison committee deputy chairperson Abdul Rashid Abdullah said it was wrong for party leaders or members to question the plan since the supreme council - Umno's highest decision making body - endorsed it.

He argued that all the 191 divisions should therefore act in unison with the supreme council.

"Penang Umno cannot possibly instruct others on who they should nominate for president and deputy president in the coming party polls. It's their right.

"But we feel obliged to urge the division leaders to honour the agreement on the proper transition plan and nominate accordingly," he told a press conference at the Penang Umno building in Georgetown today.

On July 11, Abdullah announced that both and his deputy president Najib Abdul Razak have agreed on a power transfer plan. It was warmly received by the supreme council. According to it, Abdullah will step down both as Umno president and prime minister and hand over the reins to Najib in June 2010.

The plan was Abdullah's attempt to defuse the growing clamour for his resignation following BN's disappointing show in March's general election.

umno party polls date 2008 190908Despite the supreme council's approval, several leaders - vice-president Muhyiddin Yasin, Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and even Najib of late - have questioned the agreement's validity.

Last week's supreme council meeting saw another round of 'quit now' demands from party leaders, with a number of top leaders warning that Abdullah may not be able to get the necessary 58 nominations, or one-third of the 191 divisions nationwide, to defend his president post.

In respond to the latest developments, the president's home state's liaison committee held a meeting to discuss the matter.

The 24-member committee said it backed the power transition plan, and fully support both Abdullah and Najib to defend their respective posts at the December party polls.

Abdullah, who heads the Penang liaison committee, however did not attend the meeting. His deputy, Abdul Rashid, chaired the meeting in his absence.

Ahmad Ismail attends meeting

ahmad ismail bukit bendera umno penang racist cina tumpang 050908 04Also present was suspended Bukit Bendera leader Ahmad Ismail, who attended both the meeting and the press conference.

Abdul Rashid clarified that Ahmad, who has since been appointed Bukit Bendera adviser, was allowed to attend because his suspension had not taken effect since he has yet to receive an official letter on the matter.

All Umno divisions will hold their annual general meetings and polls between Oct 9 and Nov 9.

In Penang, several divisions are expected to see intense leadership battles, notably Jelutong, Bayan Baru, Balik Pulau, Batu Kawan, Bukit Mertajam, Nibong Tebal and Permatang Pauh.

When asked if their support for Abdullah will change if divisions' leaderships change, Abdul Rashid was unperturbed about the prospect and stressed that "it would not happen in Penang".

Kelantan supports plan too

Meanwhile, Kelantan liaison committee has also unanimously decided to support the power transition plan.

Its head, Annuar Musa, announced the decision after their meeting today, according to Bernama.

Although most of the state's division chiefs attended, there was the conspicuous absence of Gua Musang chief and MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who has indicated his intention to run for the party's presidency.

With state Umno in Penang and Kelantan - both pro-Abdullah's states - throwing their support behind the party president, it is hoped that this will put pressure on other states to follow suit.