

Abdullah : Umno is not a bully
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Beh Lih Yi

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has dismissed suggestions that Umno has over-dominated the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition at the expense of other component parties.

Opening the 55th MCA annual general meeting in Kuala Lumpur today, Abdullah - who is also BN chairperson - said the issue of Umno being a "bully" has never arisen.

mca agm 181008 abduallah speech "Umno is not a 'bully' party, there is no such thing as bully, we are all friends," Abdullah said in reply to a point raised by outgoing MCA president Ong Ka Ting in a farewell speech earlier.

"If that is our way (being a bully), many component parties would have left BN by now," stressed the premier. Ong, seated on stage, smiled at Abdullah's apparent rebuttal of his earlier remark.

In a rather hard hitting speech earlier, Ong said questions have been raised over BN's power-sharing concept as Umno is seen as over-dominating the other component parties.

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was among the VIPs present this morning, alongside leaders of other BN component parties.

A total of 2,378 MCA delegates were present, or 99.04 percent of attendance.

'Opposition out to create hatred'

Elaborating later, Abdullah blamed the opposition for stirring up the issue and claimed parties such as the DAP wanted to see the split of the MCA or Gerakan.

"Their (the opposition) work is to create hatred among BN component parties.

"Do you think Ka Ting allows himself to be bullied? You think (MIC president S) Samy (Vellu) can be bullied? You think (Gerakan president Dr Koh) Tsu Koon wants to be bullied?"

"I want to say that Ka Ting is not a weak leader, he is a strong and assertive leader," explained the premier, in referring to the MCA chief who is stepping down after five years as president.

mca agm 181008 abduallah ka ting pc In his 30-minute speech, Abdullah also reminded the component parties that it is essential to keep up the strength of the ruling coalition.

BN suffered its worst ever electoral outing in the last general election in March when it lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament to the Anwar Ibrahim-led Pakatan Rakyat opposition alliance.

The Chinese and Indian communities have clearly deserted BN in the poll, with perception among Chinese voters who think the MCA is being subservient to Umno, the largest ruling party.

The MCA Youth which met yesterday has called for the creation of a second BN deputy chairperson post to be held by the party. The post is current held by Najib.

BN leaders admit perception exists

Commenting on Abdullah and Ong's statements after the opening, several leaders of BN component parties acknowledged that the 'Umno bully' perception indeed exists among the people.

PPP president M Kayveas described the perception as "very widespread" among the people.

"The prime minister has said that it's not true that the component parties were bullied but the perception is that Umno controls everything or the Umno's voice seems to be louder.

mca agm 181008 audience "Sometimes when other component parties leaders said certain thing, you will find Umno Youth giving (us) warning," said Kayveas who was also present at the MCA event today.

Asked on the proposal for a second BN deputy chief's post, the PPP president suggested a direct election to be held for the top posts at the BN supreme council instead.

He said direct election is a better way to ensure that other BN parties also have a stake in the selection of the top BN leadership.

Gerakan's Koh also acknowledged the perception but attributed it to the statements and actions of lower ranking BN component parties leaders, which let the opposition to take advantage of the situation.

He said BN top leaders like Abdullah and Najib were open-minded and always prepared to hear the views from the component parties.

On the second BN deputy chief's post, Koh said the BN can always discuss the matter in depth.