

Abdullah shocked by Thai coup

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NEW YORK: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has expressed shock over the military coup in Thailand, and hopes the country will soon be ruled by a democratically-elected government.

"I am really shocked, I didn't expect a coup would take place in Thailand," was the prime minister's reaction when asked about the coup at a press conference on Tuesday.

Abdullah is on a working visit to New York for the 61st United Nations General Assembly.

Noting that resorting to such means to change any government would not go down well with many people, he said an election would be a better proposition.

Nevertheless, Abdullah pointed out, those responsible in the Thai

coup had mentioned that democracy would return as soon as possible.

"That is an acknowledgement that we hope can be implemented as soon as possible, and if possible, an election that has been planned can be carried out at an appropriate time," he said.

Thai army commander-in-chief Gen Sonthi Boonyaratglin staged a coup d'etat in the Thai capital, with Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra away in New York to attend the general assembly.

Sonthi declared over army radio that Thaksin had been overthrown by the "Democratic Reform Council" because there was a need to control the political crisis for the benefit of the country.

"We want this to happen

peacefully and we will return democracy as soon as possible," the announcement said.

Abdullah said he had wanted to meet Thaksin, who was also here for the UN general assembly, to find out what happened but could not do so because he was too busy with his programme here.

He said there was no advisory asking Malaysians not to visit Thailand but they should defer their visit if martial law or curfew was declared.

"If there is chaos, then don't go. But if the situation is under control, and if the authorities have assured businessmen for example, or anyone at all that they can go, then it should not be a problem," he said. - Bernama