

More needs to be done before polls: PM

The Sun - 13/3/2009

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KUALA LUMPUR: The current strong economic conditions and the "feel good" sentiments do not necessarily mean the Barisan Nasional will call for an early general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

He said there was much work to be done and he wanted to see sentiments improve even more.

Abdullah, who is also the BN chairman, was asked if the strong economic conditions and positive feeling among the public were reasons for the government to call for an early election.

He was speaking to reporters after chairing a BN Supreme Council meeting at Putra World Trade Centre here.

Asked if he was ruling out the possibility of holding the election this year, he said: "I cannot reveal what I want to do."

He said the BN would be able to take on the opposition parties - which appear to be gearing up for an early election - "anytime, anywhere". The

next election is not due until April 2009.

Abdullah said the council did discuss the rumours of an early election.

He said the coalition members felt that many of the targets in the 2004 election manifesto had yet to be fulfilled, including achieving some of the Vision 2020 goals and completing some projects.

"It's normal for anyone, including party members, to speculate on an early election during the mid-term of the administration but this does not mean I am going to announce the election date," he said.

Abdullah said the council did not discuss a cabinet reshuffle and the People's Progressive Party's request for more seats.

It discussed the programmes to celebrate the nation's 50 years of independence, he said.

"What we need to look at now are our future plans for 50 years from now - 2057. How do we maintain the racial integrity, religious tolerance and unity that we have currently? What we also need is good human capital for the next 50 years," he said.