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BN govt too strong to be toppled, says Abdullah

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday spoke of attempts by the opposition parties to topple the Barisan Nasional federal government by buying over some of its members of parliament.

The prime minister said he was aware of it but said this would not happen as the BN-led government was strong and would not be easily toppled.

"Why should the government be toppled? It is very strong and we have the support (of the people). We don't go out buying over people."

The BN won 140 parliamentary seats against the opposition's 82 in the 12th general election which also saw five states falling into the hands of the opposition.

Abdullah was commenting on claims that the opposition, led by Parti Keadilan Rakyat de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, was trying to persuade BN MPs, especially those in Sabah and Sarawak, to join the opposition.

"He (Anwar) can claim so many things. Let him claim whatever he wants.

"I am aware of it (the attempts). This is what I have been hearing from people. I am just telling you (reporters) what I have been hearing from them."

On Umno Youth's decision not to take action against its exco member Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir who had called on him to step down, Abdullah said it was a decision for the movement to make.

"Whatever they have decided or thought was for the best interest of the party. I don't instruct them to do this or that. When the issue was raised, I already said this matter was for the movement to decide and they have decided. It is okay."

Abdullah also confirmed that former Umno and BN secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad had resigned from both posts.

"We had a discussion where he told me just now he wanted to step down. I have no objection and I have to respect his decision.

"He said he wanted to pave the way for the others who could continue fighting for the party's cause."

Abdullah also said there were party secretaries-general in the past who could still function effectively without a cabinet post.

On Radzi's replacement, Abdullah said he had already spoken to former Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor about it. "And he is willing to accept the posts."

On the move by two deputy ministers — Datuk Seri Tengku Azlan Abu Bakar and Datuk Anifah Aman — to decline to take up their appointments, Abdullah said they did it to pave the way for new faces.

"I met both of them yesterday. There were no fights or voices raised. It was very amicable. Anifah told me he had already been deputy minister for two terms and it was only appropriate I gave the post to someone else.

"He said he was willing to pave the way for the others. He will remain a wakil rakyat and he would give me a name of his choice to replace him."

Abdullah added he would decide on Tengku Azlan's replacement soon.

He will also be meeting Wanita Umno leaders.

"I will speak to them and hope they will understand. Not many Wanita Umno members won in the general election," he said when commenting on the dissatis-

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Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin presenting the letter of appointment to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the swearing-in ceremony at Istana Negara yesterday as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (seated, centre) looks on.

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YAYASAN KEPIMPINAN PERDANA

Abdullah explains Shahrizat's role

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faction voiced by Wanita members over the exclusion of its chief and long-serving international trade and industry minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz from the cabinet.

Abdullah also explained the position of Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil as special adviser to the prime minister on women's affairs and social development.

Her appointment, with ministerial status, was effective from yesterday.

Abdullah said Shahrizat would enjoy similar privileges accorded to a minister.

"However, she is not a cabinet member and she cannot attend cabinet meetings."

On possible overlapping of responsibilities between Shahrizat and Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen who is Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Abdullah said there was no such thing.

"I told Yen Yen and she understands her role well. It is good if Shahrizat can pay attention to the Islamic family law while matters on gender equality which encompasses all the races can be co-ordinated between the two of them.

"I am sure they can help and work together as both ladies understand their roles. Shahrizat, however, should inform Yen Yen of any decision she wanted to make.

"Both of them can work together. There has never been any problem between advisers in my office and the ministers as all of them understand their roles well."

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