

DATE: 05/04/2008

New deputies next week

The Star - 5/4/2008

PM to fill three vacancies with candidates from Umno

KUCHING: The three vacancies for federal deputy ministers will be filled next week, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister did not name the new deputy ministers, but said that they were from the same party (Umno), which the three former deputy ministers represented.

The former deputy ministers were Sabahans Datuk Ghapur Salleh and Datuk Anifah Aman, and Datuk Seri Tengku Azlan Abu Bakar.

Abdullah said he had identified the candidates for the posts of Dewan Rakyat Speaker and Deputy Speakers, and they comprised one Sarawakian and one Sabahan.

There was talk that Santubong MP Datuk Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar is the Sarawak MP who has been identified.

"We are getting in touch with them (identified candidates) and asking them how they feel about it," he told reporters when asked at Kuching Hilton yesterday.

Abdullah earlier met separately with top leaders of the state Barisan Nasional component parties - Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, Sarawak United Peoples' Party, Parti Rakyat Sarawak and Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party - as well as state Barisan MPs.

On requests by some state coalition parties for additional posts in the federal Cabinet, he indicated that this would not be considered for the time being as all the posts had been filled.

Sarawak Barisan, which won 30 of the 31 parliamentary seats in the March 8 polls, has two ministers and nine deputy ministers in the new cabinet.

Abdullah said all the Barisan MPs present at yesterday's meeting had pledged their full support for the coalition and his leadership, and that none had any intention of crossing over to the opposition camp.

Abdullah, also Umno president, said he was the target of various accusations from his critics on the defeat of Barisan in several states.

He said there were reasons for the defeat and he was not the only one responsible.

"I will be meeting Umno groups on Sunday and I have a lot to say. You just wait for that," he added.