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PM: Umno is in gear

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Polls machinery running smoothly

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Umno election machinery is running smoothly but more needs to be done, said party president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said he was happy with Umno's preparations for the general election but that there were still many matters that needed attention.

He declined to say what the issues were as they were internal party matters, but added, "things are good and preparations are going well."

Abdullah said the election preparations were discussed at the party's supreme council meeting yesterday.

"I am satisfied with their (the party leaders') hard work," he told reporters here after the meeting.

He also confirmed that the party

would hold an "explanation session" with state and division Umno leaders on Jan 22 but said it was not a special gathering as some observers claim but a normal session with the party leaders.

"That is why the party is strong, because we have this regularly," he said, adding that there would be no special presidential address on the election.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said, "There is nothing special about this meeting."

However, he did not deny that such meetings were also related to election issues, apart from other matters that needed to be discussed, such as price increases of consumer goods.

When reporters asked Abdullah whether the election would be held after the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit in Senegal in March - when he will hand over the



Good mood: Abdullah breaking out in laughter as he fields questions from reporters after the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday. With him is Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

OIC chairmanship to Senegal - he said in jest: "Maybe before (that) ... tomorrow, the newspapers will write differently."

On Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh's statement that he was ready to be appointed a federal minister after the general election, the Prime Minister declined to comment.

To a question on whether there

would be any movement of mentris besar and state information chiefs to federal posts, Abdullah said it was something he had yet to think about.

On whether the problem between Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and the state politician Home Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad had been resolved, Abdullah said the matter was not

raised at yesterday's meeting.

Radzi, who is Umno secretary-general, had said that Shahidan should step down to ensure the stability of the state Umno. He and Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid, who is also from Perlis, had claimed that Shahidan was preventing both of them from attending programmes in the state.

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