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We were sabotaged: Abdullah

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday Barisan Nasional (BN) would not have lost control of Kedah and Perak if not for sabotage by Umno members in several parliament and state seats.

"We would not have lost if not for problems created within the areas. We should have won 14 more parliamentary seats and 22 more state seats (in these two states), based on analysis and information we received," he said, expressing disappointment over the sabotage, which led to the BN's shortfall of eight seats to retain its two-thirds majority in Parliament.

"The issue of sabotage will be referred to the Umno disciplinary committee," Abdullah said. He declined to reveal the possible reasons, saying the matter should come before the committee first.

He was speaking to reporters after a briefing for Umno division information bureau members, which was also attended by Umno Supreme Council members, including party deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, and Umno veterans, at Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

At the press conference, Abdullah also hit back at his detractors, mainly his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had been taking pot shots at him to the point of openly calling for his resignation as the prime minister and Umno president.

On Dr Mahathir

"People say I'm *lembik* (weak) and talk as if the ministers and the cabinet are made up of stupid people and that Khairy (Jamaluddin, his son-in-law) is the only smart one. These allegations

seem to have no limits. It's just blind accusations (hurled at the leadership).

"Didn't we have limitations before? I know. Reporters were called in with Tun Mahathir when he took over as the prime minister and were told not to write about Tun Hussein (Onn). Who was responsible for *Ops Lallang*? I know. It's not that I don't know.

"Some people can be given coverage while some others were not to be given coverage. These were instructions issued from time to time. I know.

"Looks like many Umno people are now being brave and coming out to speak about things that happened at the time.

"He (Dr Mahathir) is misusing his strength. When we won in 2004, he said it was *kuat sangat, tak elok* (too strong, it was not appropriate) and there must be opposition.

"But when the Opposition rose, I thought he would celebrate but *hentam pulak* (he hit out instead). So attaining great success was a mistake and to secure a slim win is also a mistake. What is it that can be accepted?"

"Give us a chance to do what's best for the party, the government and for the country."

Asked if he would "open a file" on Mahathir, Abdullah said: "It is not my business to open files on anybody. It's a matter for any agency ... if they think it is reasonable to open files on accusations they have evidence against."

On Anwar and Tengku Razaleigh

"He (Tengku Razaleigh) should be more responsible and look at Kelantan himself. Instead of working together and helping us wrest Kelantan, it is because of him, we lost support there."

He also compared Anwar to

Najib, saying: "He (Najib) sees himself as my successor, not as an alternative leader - like Anwar is saying he is the alternative leader to Mahathir. He can wait. I am the leader today."

Asked if he was going to "fight it out" with his detractors, Abdullah said: "I need to say what's reasonable for me to say. I say what I need to, if I don't need to, I won't say, but I know the people want me to talk (against these issues) and I do.

"I only talk to strengthen the confidence of the Umno members to the party and to ensure that the leadership has the continued support of its members."

On reform of the public administration, the judiciary and the party

"There is a need for reform in various systems of the public administration, including the judiciary system which now has a tainted image, due to issues that happened not in my time.

"Our people, especially the business community, think lowly of our judiciary. The evidence is that they don't want any disputes of contracts to be referred to the Malaysian courts.

"They would rather take disputes of any contracts out of the country to Singapore or other countries like Australia, Hongkong. They have no confidence. This is bad. We have to do something about it."

Abdullah said reform will be carried out under the New Economic Policy in incentives through the economic corridors; in the policing system and at the public administration level where the efforts to increase the efficiency and productivity of the public delivery system must be continued.

In the party, a mechanism needs to be formulated to make it obligatory for the top leadership

to provide regular briefings to the grassroots.

"Once a year is not good enough, so making this an obligation will better strengthen the relationship from the branches right to the leadership," he said.

On politics and the election

Abdullah said he told the division information bureau members at the closed-door briefing that there was a need to prioritise the efforts to strengthen Umno because it plays an important role in BN.

"We lost four states, and we have to understand that the election was one that gave us a signal that we must accept and admit and we need to prepare to carry out these efforts," he said, acknowledging the much-eroded support to the BN in the March 8 polls, compared to the large mandate it won in 2004.

"I understand that the support then was because of the promises we made in our manifesto, which included issues that needed to be overcome due to the weakness of the administration before mine.

"There was high expectation and hope that we could do something about it.

"I admit that in the four years, our government - under my leadership - could not carry through the promises made fully.

"Thank God, our economy is doing well and we hope this position will continue to improve and we hope that it is strong enough to face global challenges that we may find difficulties with."

Asked to comment on reports of PKR buying over some 30 Umno assemblymen, Abdullah, who described the act as disgusting, said: "Never mind *lah*. (let them) do whatever they want. They are looking for people in Sarawak who want to leave Umno. They do not care about the people's choice."