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PM: Chua's decision appropriate

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek's decision to resign as health minister is an appropriate move under the circumstances, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Abdullah, who received Chua's resignation letter yesterday morning, said the resignation was appropriate because of the negative public reaction after the health minister admitted on Tuesday that he was the man engaged in sex acts with a woman in two DVDs.

Abdullah said Chua's decision to quit was not discussed in the weekly cabinet meeting as it involved the minister's personal affair. "It was not discussed and no decision was taken," he said.

"The former health minister had attended the first cabinet meeting for the year but did not mention anything. I was aware of the scandal only on Tuesday and that Chua's explanation on the issue is sufficient.

"I would like to thank him for taking into account the negative effects of his actions on the government and the party in coming to a decision," Abdullah told specially arranged press conference.

He said the health portfolio would be filled with an appropriate candidate

from MCA, adding that an acting health minister would be appointed.

"I will have to discuss with (Datuk Seri) Ong Ka Ting and MCA. No decision on this issue has been made," he said.

He added that the question of a candidate for the Labis parliamentary seat would have to be discussed with the MCA leadership.

Abdullah said he had not viewed the two DVDs, lasting 56 and 44 minutes respectively, but "there will be no further action against Chua".

He was also confident that the MCA would weather the resignation of its party vice-president. "I do not believe that there will be a crisis in the MCA as the party leadership has the ability to handle the matter," he said.

Abdullah, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said that it was unlikely that the scandal would have any effect on the coalition's preparation for the general election.

"I do not see it affecting (the BN) ... as the election machinery is working as usual. We do not lack the manpower to continue whatever preparations that we are undertaking," he said.

Asked if he thought Chua was the victim of a political plot, Abdullah replied: "The police will get to the bottom of the matter involving the sex DVD."