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Those who love party will not leave: Abdullah

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KUALA LUMPUR: Expressing surprise over Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's decision to quit Umno, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he hoped Umno members realise the importance of staying loyal to the party to ensure it is strong enough to continue its struggles.

Addressing Mahathir's call to members to follow him out of the party, Abdullah said: "I wouldn't know what other members would do, but I believe they won't leave the party because they care and love Umno, that's what I know. They want to be Umno members, they want Umno to be strong... there's no reason, no logic for them to leave Umno."

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No reason for me to step down: Abdullah

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Asked if he would step down as the prime minister as Mahathir had said he would not come back until Abdullah leaves, he said: "Why should I? I have work to do."

It was not the first time that Mahathir had asked Abdullah to step down.

Abdullah said the party has served the people, the race, the country and all races well, and "we want Umno to

continue with these struggles".

Asked if he expected other Umno members to follow in Mahathir's footsteps, Abdullah said: "If you care for the party, then stay on, if they want to abandon the party then it is their choice but I believe they won't do that.

"Leaving Umno means leaving the Barisan Nasional, that's my belief."

Asked if he was worried about what was happening, he said: "Maybe I am, maybe."

However, he said he felt this crisis will not divide Umno parliamentarians or prompt them to leave.

"I believe Umno members love the party and they will find it in their hearts to continue with the party's struggles. It is important they think things through carefully before they leave Umno and its struggles," he said.

"I won't say that this will not affect anything, but I feel that the majority want to continue being with Umno."