

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi spoke at length about several issues close to his heart during an exclusive interview with Mingguan Malaysia ahead of the 56th Umno Annual Assembly, which will be held from July 19 to 23. Among the issues the Umno president touched on were money politics, meritocracy, approved permits for importing cars and his son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin.

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Money politics must be curbed

If not, party risks corruption



UMNO could become a party for the rich and the poor would become mere followers if money politics were not curbed, party president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

"Only the rich will become leaders of the party," he said.

Abdullah said Umno could also become a party which was divided by factions and experience aggressively fought elections.

"There may be leaders who would be compromised because of corruption," he added.

Abdullah said Umno would also have leaders who no longer feel responsible to those whom they led because they would

not feel they were entrusted to lead.

"They will say, 'I gave money, you gave me votes and that's all there is to it. Why are you coming to me to ask for this or that?'," he said.

The Umno president said the relationship between leaders and members would be purely based on money.

"What will happen to Umno then?" he asked.

Abdullah added that everyone would be rushing to make money using all kinds of ways and this could lead to widespread corruption.

He said such points were raised before and there were

Umno members who did not want corruption.

"However, the number of members who wanted and practised corruption was quite large until it has become a problem which is causing concern today," he said.

"The problem now is that Umno members themselves are busy talking about it," he said.

Abdullah also said that there were several complaints against party supreme council members who were investigated by the disciplinary board.

"But maybe, there was not enough evidence for action to be taken against them," he added.