

PM: Don't take advantage of my 'soft' approach

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told the party delegates attending the general assembly not to take advantage of his "soft" approach.

"Yes, I told them that, and I also told them it is hard to be nice and patient," he said when asked if it was true he had told the 2,554 delegates who attended the presidential pre-council council briefing yesterday that they should not take advantage of his "soft" approach.

Abdullah, who was speaking to reporters after the briefing, did not want to elaborate.

On whether the issue of former party president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was raised at the briefing, he said it was brought up.

Abdullah said he spoke on

many issues, including those that were raised by Mahathir, such as claims that the economy was not moving, and government projects.

"I have to say it, as it is important for the members to understand, and the people later. Wait for my speech during the opening of the general assembly," he said.

Abdullah also said there was no gag order for anyone to raise any issues, provided they were within the rules and regulation of the general assembly.

Asked to comment on his view of the party now compared to when he first took over the helm in 2003, he said: "If you look at our Umno representatives in parliament, senate and the state assemblies and what is happening, there is a change for Umno members when they raise their views, which is much clearer and without any feelings of fear

anymore?"

Abdullah also told the delegates to consider the interests of other groups.

"The Barisan Nasional component parties have voluntarily given Umno the role to head the coalition cooperation through understanding. Therefore, it is important for the Umno leadership at all levels to understand this," he said.

"Any action taken must take into consideration the views of other coalition parties and we must always be fair and equal."

He said all Malaysians should understand the need to be careful with sensitive issues to avoid creating any unwanted reaction which can affect unity.

The briefing, he said, also touched on the importance of the role of Umno members in ensuring that the party remained strong and firm and close to the people.