

PM sees candidates as 'credible and competent'

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KEPALA BATAS, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is leading Barisan Nasional into battle tomorrow for the first time with a line-up of candidates he believes will be accepted by voters as "credible and competent".

He also acknowledged that some members not picked to contest the March 21 polls were still smarting from disappointment but felt that they would soon come around to supporting the BN candidate in their constituencies.

"There are bound to be some candidates who may feel slighted, but I am sure in due time, they will place the party's interests above everything else," he told reporters after launching a flood mitigation project here.

The BN chairman expressed confidence that everyone would work together for the good of the coalition. He did not expect any acts of "sabotage" by those not fielded.

Abdullah, who was accompanied by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, also officiated a groundbreaking ceremony for a farmers' wholesale market, along with the opening of Jalan Dua in Kepala Batas.

The new market will serve as a site for farmers, livestock and fisheries breeders to sell their produce to wholesalers from the northern region.

This was the first time he was meeting the press since the list of BN candidates for all the states was finalised.

Pahang BN was the last state to name its slate of candidates.

The PM was asked to comment on

the generational change and whether fielding new and young faces would affect the BN's chances of capturing a two-thirds majority in the coming polls.

Abdullah said reports received from the ground so far had been positive.

"We cannot avoid the reality that the younger candidates are set to be our future leaders, and now is the right time to introduce them," he said.

Abdullah, who is also Umno's acting president, reminded those who were dropped that at one time, they too contested at the expense of someone else.

"If they are genuine and committed to the party's struggles, they will be supportive of the new candidates."

Earlier in his speech, Abdullah said since the BN existed for the

people, it was important that government departments such as district offices were run in an efficient manner.

"This is to ensure that the needs of the people are addressed in a speedy manner," he added.

Highlighting the role of the people in ensuring that development progressed, Abdullah called for co-operation from the public when land acquisition was involved.

"The reason why some projects take off late sometimes is because people object to them being built on their land," he added.

Abdullah also said that one attribute which set Malaysia apart from other countries, was that the Government's concern for the people both in urban and rural areas was reflected in on-going development projects.