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Abdullah dismisses talk of Anwar being PM

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JOHOR BARU: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will not be the prime minister by Sept 16, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The prime minister said he was not worried by Anwar's threats despite his victory in Permatang Pauh.

Neither did Abdullah believe that any Barisan Nasional members of parliament would join Pakatan Rakyat.

"We are well aware of his threats, but as far as we are concerned, we will look after our people. We will continue to perform and we don't have to worry (about Anwar becoming prime minister)," he said.

"BN members of parliament

will not leave the party. That is not possible. They have promised to remain in BN," Abdullah stressed.

Anwar, who won the Permatang Pauh by-election on Tuesday with a majority of 15,671 votes over BN candidate Datuk Arif Shah Omar Shah, had announced earlier this year that he would become prime minister by Sept 16.

Speaking to the press yesterday after accompanying Sultan of Brunei Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah on his visit to the Iskandar Malaysia development corridor, Abdullah said he was not overly worried by the results of the Permatang Pauh by-election.

Asked whether the increased

majority, compared with the 13,388 majority-vote garnered by Anwar's wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in the March 8 election were "warning signs" to BN, Abdullah dismissed the idea.

"After all, the last general election gave us a strong victory. We are only eight seats short of a two-thirds majority, it is not that we lost by 20 or 30 seats, only eight seats. We have a very strong government."

Asked whether the by-election result would affect unity within BN, Abdullah said: "We understand what happened to the coalition at the general election.

"The result of this by-election is

merely an extension of what happened then."

Asked for the reasons behind BN's loss, Abdullah said: "We haven't made an analysis yet, it is better for me to answer after that."

Abdullah however congratulated Anwar on his victory.

"I'd like to congratulate Anwar for his win. For us in BN, it is a result which we accept, since it is the people's choice. However, this is not a bad loss for BN.

"Anwar was expected to win strongly enough for the BN candidate to lose his deposit, meaning that he (Anwar) needed a majority of more than 17,000 votes, but this did not happen."