

Najib: Anwar trying to avoid real issue

BALING: Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was attempting to divert attention from the real issue by calling the Prime Minister to step down.

He said the dispute now was Anwar's position and problems and not the position of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Why is he attacking the Prime Minister and other people such as the police and judiciary? He is diverting from the real issue," he told reporters here yesterday.

Najib, who is also Education Minister, said both the Dewan Rakyat members and Umno delegates had given Dr Mahathir full support as Prime Minister and Umno president respectively while the people had given a five-year mandate to the present government in the last general election.

Anwar had said Dr Mahathir should step down because he refused to heed advice from those around him.

Najib also said Anwar was going on the offensive in attacking other people possibly

because he felt that he was being "pushed to a corner".

On a claim by Anwar that ministers were just like mere followers (*pak turut*) of the Prime Minister, Najib said there had been instances when Cabinet ministers disagreed with suggestions from the Prime Minister and decisions were changed.

"Datuk Seri Anwar also knows the situation," he said.

In Shah Alam, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said Dr Mahathir was the only person capable of bringing the country out of the economic doldrums.

"He should continue leading the country for a long time," he said.

On the appointment of Umno vice-presidents Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Najib as joint chairmen of the management and disciplinary committee, Abu Hassan said the appointment was apt.

"It's a wise decision as both are vice-presidents of the party," he said, adding that Selangor Umno would give them their fullest cooperation.