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Najib: I'm surprised at being considered by Dr Mahathir for DPM post

Sharanjit Singh

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak said he was surprised with the Prime Minister's statement about him being considered as Deputy Prime Minister when there was a change in the country's leadership.

"I don't know if it's an endorsement (from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) but it was a statement by the Prime Minister and I suppose it carries the same weightage as other statements from him," he said.

Asked if he was prepared to assume duties as Deputy Prime Minister and if there had been a compromise among Umno leaders, Najib said: "When the time comes we'll let the leadership decide ... I don't dare answer if there was a compromise.

"Right now we'll just continue with our work."

Najib said Umno leaders would continue working hard as a team and respect Dr Mahathir's wish for a reduction in internal politicking and lobbying for posts.

He said this when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement during a meeting with the Kubang Pasu Umno division committee members yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was reported to have said that when he was no longer Prime Minister, Pak Lah (Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) would be the Prime Minister and perhaps Najib would be Deputy Prime Minister.

However, he was happy that both Umno leaders were willing to wait 16 months to get the posts.

Dr Mahathir said the situation was different some time back when there was a leader who wanted to seize power from him by toppling him from the Prime Minister's post.