

Abdullah's decision

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Najib will not question choice of DPM

KUALA LUMPUR: Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak says he will not question the wisdom of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Hadawi in choosing the deputy prime minister when it is time for him to make the appointment.

He said no one could question Abdullah's choice of deputy prime minister as that would be his prerogative when he becomes the prime minister.

"Given his (Abdullah's) vast experience, surely he would make a decision based on the interests of the country, Umno and the people's struggle as a whole," he said.

"It would be odd for us to dispute or question the incoming prime minister's choice of deputy prime minister," he told a news conference on the motions to be tabled at the Umno general assembly, which begins today.

Najib, an Umno vice-president, said this when asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's concern about the possible jostling for the Umno deputy president's post when he retires in October.

Mahathir, in an interview with

Mingguan Malaysia on Sunday, said he was worried that any jostling for the post of deputy president in the party election next year could cause an upheaval.

In their reactions, the other two Umno vice-presidents, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib, were reported to have said that they would also abide by Abdullah's decision.

On Sunday, Abdullah said he had received assurances from party leaders, from the vice-presidents to state leaders, that he be given a free hand to choose his deputy when the time comes.

Najib, when asked if Mahathir's statement could be taken to mean that the post would not be contested next year, said: "Let's not make assumptions because the important thing is the preparation for the general election.

"I have confidence in the wisdom of the leaders and delegates (on this matter). We need to ensure that our strength is not eroded. The other leaders and I will work hard to ensure that Dr Mahathir's suggestion can be defended to remove his worry about the scramble for party posts," he said.