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Najib: Prerogative of PM to choose candidates for elections

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak said although many leaders have voiced their willingness to step down, it would still be the prerogative of the Prime Minister to select candidates for the general election.

"In our system, whoever is the PM has the prerogative," he said. "But when we talk about bringing new faces into Umno, we have to define what new faces mean."

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Taib said he believed party members would abide and support any decision made by the party leadership, including who should be candidates in elections.

"The Umno tradition will prevail. Umno has gone through many elections and, in such instances, its members have always supported the leadership's decisions. Problems will arise only if there are those who question and challenge the party's decisions."

On the move by leaders who had expressed their willingness not to stand as candidates in the next general election, he said this was a new but healthy development in Umno.

Barisan Nasional secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said Dr Mahathir's statement should also be extended to leaders of other BN component parties and not limited to Umno alone.

"Anyone who thinks that he is no longer able to deliver should go, irrespective of his position in the party. There should be a fair number of experienced and new faces in the next general election."

Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said said Dr Mahathir's statement should be seen as a re-assurance to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi that he would have full control in running the country when he takes over the leadership.

Umno supreme council member Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said, "As Cabinet members, we are appointed and should be ready to vacate our post when the time comes."

Another supreme council member Datuk Dr Norraesah Mohamad said it was natural for a leader to have his own line-up whom he can work with.

She said Umno leaders who had expressed their intention not to contest in the next general election should do so wholeheartedly.

"There are some who have said they are willing to step down but leave their fate to the Prime Minister to decide. This should not be the case. Once you have stated your willingness to let go of your post, you should do so without setting any conditions."