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Najib will accept Abdullah's decision

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today he will not question the wisdom of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in naming his successor when the time comes.

Najib said it was Abdullah's sole prerogative to choose his deputy when he takes over as Prime Minister after Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad steps down in October.

"No one can question Abdullah in choosing who he wants. It is improper for us to question his choice. I believe that Abdullah with his vast experience will make a decision that is well accepted," Najib said at a Press conference.

Najib, who is also Defence Minister, said this when asked to comment on remarks by Dr Mahathir in an interview with a local Malay daily that he was worried about a scramble for the deputy presidency after Abdullah takes over from him.

He said that Umno members' priority now should be preparations for the next general election and not party elections.

"Umno has to be strong, united and relevant to face all the challenges. It is important that Umno is strengthened."

Najib said that whoever was appointed as DPM would get the party delegates' support to become the deputy president.

"That is our tradition and Umno members must ensure that this is maintained if they want the party to remain strong."

Asked whether there would not be an election for the deputy president post next year, Najib said: "Do not make too many assumptions as what is important now is the general election.

"I have full trust in the leadership and Umno delegates. My colleagues and I will work hard to ensure the party is strengthened."

On the 54th Umno general assembly, Najib, who is the party's resolutions committee chairman, said Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein would propose the debate on the motion of thanks on the party president's speech. He would be seconded by Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said.

"Our rationale is to give young leaders an opportunity to express their views on the speech," Najib said.

He said the resolutions on education and religion would be proposed by Johor delegate Senator Datuk Ghaffar Gurahhu and seconded by Datuk Zainal Abidin Sakom (Selangor).

The resolution on economy would be proposed by Wanita Umno representative Raja Ropiah Raja Abdullah and seconded by Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin (Kelantan).

Najib said the names were decided by Abdullah after discussions with the State Umno liaison committee heads.

Asked whether there was any proposal to table an emergency resolution, he said to date there was none.

Najib said that Dr Mahathir's keynote address would focus, among other things, on international affairs, Malaysia's role as an Islamic nation and the preparation for the next general assembly.

"All members should listen carefully to what Dr Mahathir says. There had been times when Dr Mahathir felt that his speech was not understood by the delegates."