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Najib: I will accept whoever Pak Lah picks

UMNO vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak reiterated yesterday that he would accept whole-heartedly Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's choice of deputy when Abdullah becomes the Prime Minister.

And members, too, must give their unwavering support to the chosen one, Najib said in his winding-up speech at the assembly.

"And in keeping with the Umno tradition, I am of the opinion that whoever is appointed Deputy Prime Minister should also hold the party deputy president's post.

"This honourable tradition should be up-held by all Umno members."

Najib, who is Defence Minister, also pledged loyalty to Abdullah, adding that all Umno members must be loyal.

He said he was confident that Abdullah had the wisdom to carry on with what party president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was leaving behind.

"Pak Lah, have faith that I will support your leadership and provide you with all the backing you need.

"We are confident you will be able to lead and guide the party to greater heights.

"When the time comes for you to take over the party, do with it as well as you can and we will stand by you every step of the way," he said.

Najib, who also paid tribute to Dr Mahathir's leadership, described the Prime Minister as the architect of modern Malays, who has reformed the minds of the Malays, who is the voice for the Third World countries, and is an Islamic warrior who has struggled to spread the true teachings of Islam.

"I had wanted to include these noble characteristics in Umno's tribute to Dr Mahathir, but he said it was not necessary.

"Dr Mahathir had said that if party members loved him, they would heed his advice and that would be enough. This is the essence of a true leader and that of an honourable statesman.

"We all love you Datuk Seri Dr President."

Najib also reiterated that Umno's enemies were party members who try to pit one member against another and spread rumours.

He said Umno must rid itself of all negative elements as the party's struggle was not over yet and could only be achieved if all members were united.