

Najib wants only 'winnable candidates' for S'wak
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Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said today he will exercise his rights as Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman to veto potential candidates to ensure only winnable ones become BN candidates in the next election.

He said the matter would be discussed with the Sarawak BN leaders to get a consensus on the principle of winnable candidates, especially within the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), in view of the coming state election.

"This is an important principle because when we field a candidate, it means the candidate is representing the BN and we need the candidate to win because we want to form the government," he told a news conference after officiating at the SUPP convention at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK) here.

Ensuring that the nominated candidates would also be accepted by the people in that particular constituency was the only way for the SUPP to remain relevant in order to regain the eight out of 19 seats it lost in the 2006 state election, Najib said.

Based on that principle, he said, all the BN component parties in the state should vet their potential candidates not only based on their positions in their parties but also to analyse much deeper to see if there were other options.

Earlier Najib told the 6,000-strong delegates that he wanted SUPP to submit names of candidates who are able to win in the coming election, adding, "Please give me winnable candidates, I don't care whether they are old, new or middle-aged as long as they can win."

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In the party's bid to revive and inject new blood, he said SUPP, which mostly represented the urban areas, needed to engage, understand and feel the pulse of the people and protect their interests.

He said the BN leadership would give SUPP the support and space it needed as long as it was sensible and matured in its ways without making statements that might upset the other state component parties.

"Speak to me or the state BN chairman Abdul Taib Mahmud. We have solved many problems, including the land issue for which Sarawak has the cheapest land premium in the country," he said.

"But you (SUPP) cannot keep on demanding without responding. You must respond because we cannot keep on giving without getting any support for the BN," he said, in obvious reference to requests such as for more federal allocation for Chinese and mission schools, small and medium industries and state land for agricultural purposes that were put forward by SUPP president Chan.

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