

## **Umno will not claim leadership in Penang BN**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**October 16, 2011**

**By Hazlan Zakaria**

Umno is willing to take a back seat in Penang in the name of BN unity and work together with other components to shore up Gerakan in the northern state.

"I am prepared to say that Umno will not claim the state leadership in Penang," assured BN chairperson Najib Abdul Razak in his speech when opening the Gerakan's 40th annual general meeting in Kuala Lumpur today.

najib abdul razakHowever, he added, this can only work if Gerakan can "rise to the challenge" and heal itself to once more becoming "a force to be reckoned with in national politics" and offer a viable alternative government and line-up for the people of Penang.

Najib also warned Gerakan that it must make tough decisions and hard choices in order to "heal" itself.

"Ensure this, and I will not abandon Penang as yet," assured the prime minister, adding that despite the defeatist view of some, he believe the 'Pearl of the Orient' is still not totally out of the BN's reach.

The lack of a viable candidate line-up has been said to be the bane of Gerakan in the last polls, something which Najib may have sought to pre-empt when he also invoked the BN mantra of "winnable candidate" as the yardstick that the multi-racial party should look to.

koh tsu koonEarlier in his policy speech, Gerakan President Koh Tsu Koon also mentioned the same principle, highlighting that the party had laboriously interviewed potential candidates from over a year ago as the party's central working committee members sifted their ranks for their "winnable candidates".

In the press conference afterward, Najib related that he had discussed the matter with Penang Umno liaison chief Zainal Abidin Osman (below), who had agreed in principle with his decision.

"Umno will not ask for the chief minister seat if BN were to be given the mandate by the rakyat... It will not be an Umno candidate," repeated Najib.

NONEWith regard to the possibility of seat swaps in the next polls, Najib said there will be some but "not many".

"In 2008, we used the 2004 seat allocations. Now we will use the existing seats as a base, but there will be some adjustments that need to be done," he explained.

Prior to this, Penang Umno had been vocal in their call for the state leadership of Penang BN and the CM's seat be given to the Malay-based party as it had won more state seats in the last general election than any of the other BN parties that fielded candidates in the northern state.

Umno won 11 seats in the state legislature, while MCA and Gerakan lost all those that they contested.