

## **PM to head to Sabah to stave off defections**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Prime Minister Najib Razak today said he will go to Sabah following the defection of two BN representatives in the state where he will announce the terms of reference for the long-delayed royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into Sabah's illegal immigrant problem.

The premier also brushed off claims that more BN component party members are about to defect, namely from Upko and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

"It's fine, so far it is just rumours but what is most important now is our position is not threatened and we are capable of handling this challenge.

"We will take the necessary steps to remedy the situation and further strengthen Umno and BN," he told a press conference after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting this evening at the party's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

The RCI was announced by the premier on June 1, but no other details were provided then.

Najib added that he has already met some Sabah BN leaders following the defections but would go to the ground next Saturday.

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has announced that there could be more good news when he, too, will visit Sabah a day after Najib's visit.

The state has been rocked by the defection of Tuaran MP Wilfred Bumburing and Beaufort MP Lajim Ukin from BN.

Lajim, who was Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister, and Bumburing quit BN last weekend and pledged their support for Pakatan.

'Defections will not affect GE date'

Najib added that Lajim's position will remain vacant after he was ejected from the cabinet over his rebellious move.

However, the premier added that Lajim has yet to be sacked from Umno, adding that he has two weeks to respond to the show-cause letter issued to him by the party.

"He will go through the due process like everyone else," he said.

He added that Beaufort Umno deputy chief Isnin Aliasnih will serve as acting chief following Lajim's resignation from the position.

Asked whether the defections would delay the general election, Najib replied: "No".

"I do not know when the election can be held - this year or next year. We cannot assume it is this year, it could be next year. We cannot assume it is next year, it could be this year," he added.

Lajim and Wilfred had last Sunday publicly denounced the BN and pledged support for Pakatan Rakyat.

It was also announced that Lajim was to lead the Pakatan Perubahan Sabah while Wilfred will take charge of Angkatan Perubahan Sabah which together would form the Pakatan-friendly movement Sabah Reform Front.

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