

Najib enjoys keeping M'sians guessing on GE14 date

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Amid continued speculation on possible snap polls, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has remained coy on whether the 14th general election would be held next year.

In an interview with *The Sunday Star*, Najib said he enjoyed keeping the people guessing.

Asked whether the general election will be in the first or second half of 2017, Najib reportedly said, "Not necessarily, it can be later. I'm enjoying this speculation. Let people go on speculating."

Najib meanwhile said BN candidates must first pass its new and 'tougher' vetting system before given a chance to contest.

He said this was the method which had been tested in the Sungai Besar and Kuala Kangsar by-elections, where BN candidates from Umno won.

Najib, who is Umno president and BN chairperson, said the same principle will be applied to component parties in the coalition.

"If you don't meet the minimum criteria, you will not even be considered, period.

"That makes it easier for me as president of the party. If they didn't pass, it is not because of me but because of merit," he was quoted as saying.

"There is nothing I can do, they have to accept the fact that they lost," he said.

The Sunday Star also reported it is understood that several component party leaders had failed to qualify during the trial run of the new screening system.

"It is like entering university. You must have a minimum of 2A's or 2B's. If you only have 2C's you cannot get in," said Najib who admitted that BN did not have an objective method to select its candidates in the last general election.

"When I came up with the principle of winnable candidates, many considered themselves as winnable when in fact they are not," he said.

This method, he said, would be implemented on top of trying to accommodate demands from the divisions for local candidates, who would also have to go through the vetting process.

In the past, top Umno leaders had warned its members to not resort to sabotage and remain loyal, even if they were not chosen to contest.

"But what they have to realise is that the final choice is with the leadership and that has

always been the case," Najib was quoted as saying.

On possible changes at state level, Najib merely said that he was keeping his options open in order to strike a balance between change and stability.

While remaining coy on the details, Najib reportedly promised that his eventual decision would be what is best for the states in question.

The BN state leadership has, among others, evaded a crisis in Terengganu that was initially triggered by a change of menteri besar from Ajil state-assemblyperson Ahmad Said to Seberang Takir state-assemblyperson Ahmad Razif Abdul Rahman.

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