

Najib : I have good understanding with Pak Lah
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Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, in the face of mounting pressure on his boss Abdullah to resign, today issued a statement saying that he would assist the premier in facing the coming challenges. MCPX

He said that Barisan Nasional accepted the people's decision with an open heart although it was disappointed with the overall outcome of the election, including losing power in four states and failing to regain Kelantan despite high hopes of doing so.

He also called on all Umno supporters to close ranks and work hard in regaining the confidence of the people.

However conspicuously missing from his statement was any open backing for Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to continue to lead the country and Umno.

Political observers note that Najib had only pledged to "assist the YAB president in facing this big challenge".

Calls for Abdullah to resign

In recent days, many Umno quarters have begun to blame Abdullah for the coalition's worst election defeat in the history of the nation.

Calls are being made for him to step down and let Najib assume the leadership. A leading proponent of this campaign has been former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

However Abdullah, who was sworn in this morning as the prime minister, is fighting back in resisting such calls.

"Why should I step down?" he told a cheering crowd outside his home late yesterday. "Our party has won. I do not fear anyone except Allah. I will stay on, I will not give up.

"We have to continue our struggle, our agenda is far from over. We want our country to be progressive and successful and for you, the people, to be happy," he added.

In Saturday's election, BN won only 140 of the 222 parliamentary seats. The opposition, led by PKR, won the remaining 82 with the Anwar Ibrahim-led party gaining 31, DAP winning 28 and PAS bagging 23.

The BN coalition's popular vote in Peninsular Malaysia also suffered a massive blow when it won only 48.7 percent of the popular votes. In 2004, BN rode the wave with a 64 percent popular votes nationwide.

Najib's statement in full: "The 12th general election was conducted in a smooth and transparent manner in accordance with the democratic practice of the country.

"The people of Malaysia have expressed their stand and made their choice, and we are

grateful that the Barisan Nasional has been given the mandate to administer the country.

"Although the BN is disappointed over its failure to retain power in five states as well as its failure to obtain a two-thirds majority (in Parliament), we accept the people's decision with an open heart.

"We will continue to strive to regain the confidence of the people.

"We ask Umno members to close ranks in facing this challenge.

"As the deputy president, I will assist the YAB president in facing this big challenge."

Umno backs Abdullah

Later in the day, after attending Umno's supreme council meeting, Najib said that the party had given its "full support" to remain as leader.

"The Umno supreme council has given its full support to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to remain as the prime minister and Umno president," Najib said after a meeting of the policy-making body.

"And this stance is very important to maintain investor confidence in our country and to allow the party to face all the challenges."

Najib also hoped that there would be "no doubts in Umno leadership and no speculation or effort to change Pak Lah's leadership".

"I have a good understanding with him as party president and prime minister and it is the wish of all in the supreme council that his good relations continues," he added.

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