

**PM : I'll contest in Umno polls, succession can wait**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Apr 14, 2008**  
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Embattled Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today vowed that he would be defending his Umno president post in December and that the succession plan can wait after the crucial party polls. MCPX

He also stressed that he would hand over power to his deputy, Najib Abdul Razak only when the time is right.

bn mp briefing pwtc 140408 abdullahAccording to Abdullah, he still has unfinished business to do before he steps down to allow Najib to take over the helm.

However, he did not give a time-frame as to when this would take place apart from saying that it would be after the Umno polls in December.

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after a closed-door meeting with about 500 BN elected representatives - both those in state assemblies and Parliament - at the Putra World Trade Centre this afternoon.

The prime minister argued that he has to put the party in order before handing the rein over to his deputy.

"Of course, I want the transfer of power to be smooth so that the party will be in good hands and there will be no chaos," said Abdullah.

"I can't just hand a messy party over to Najib and say 'here you go, good luck... that's your problem'. That's not the proper way."

**Why shouldn't I contest?**

Abdullah also dismissed rumours that a time-frame had been set for his retirement at a meeting with Umno leaders in Johor last Friday.

"They (Umno leaders) said that they would leave it to me and that they will support me and my deputy in the party polls in December.

"After that, Pak Lah and Najib will decide (on) the transfer of power," Abdullah said, referring to himself by his nickname. "Why should I not contest the party polls?"

The premier was also confident that all BN members of parliament were loyal to him and would not initiate a vote of no confidence against him when Parliament convenes at the end of this month.

On when the transfer of power would take place, Abdullah said: "I cannot reveal that to you."

He added that those calling for his resignation does not represent the grassroots.

Abdullah has come under severe pressure from within his own party to step down and let Najib to take over. His detractors are blaming him for the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition's unprecedented setback in the March 8 general election.

Former Umno vice-president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah has indicated that he would contest for the Umno top post to "heal the party".

Today, Foreign Minister Rais Yatim joined the chorus of senior Umno officials calling for Abdullah to step down after International Trade and Industry Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said over the weekend an immediate change of leadership was necessary to ensure the party's survival.

Former Selangor Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo also called for a succession plan that will see Najib taking over without delay.

### **It would be a coup: Shahrir**

Meanwhile, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Shahrir Abdul Samad said he failed to understand why Muhyiddin and Rais was forcing the prime minister's hand.

parliamentary integrity forum 070606 syed shahrir pc"First of all, I don't see why there is a crisis in Umno when only a small number of Malays have abandoned the party," he said after Abdullah's meeting with BN elected representatives.

According to independent statistics, there was a five percent swing against the government among Malay voters in last month's general elections.

"If at all there was any erosion of votes for BN, it came from the component parties (MCA, MIC and Gerakan). The candidates from Umno did very well as the Malay support was quite high," said Shahrir, who is Johor Bahru MP and Abdullah's close ally.

"The problem was with the non-Malay parties, yet somehow Umno leaders successfully created a leadership crisis when there is no correlation with the results," he added.

On certain quarters trying to force Abdullah to quit, Shahrir revealed that the premier had already said he was going and that he had given a date to (Umno vice-president) Muhyiddin at the Johor meeting last Friday.

"Abdullah has set a date. But obviously it's going to happen after December. Unfortunately, there seems to be people who want it to be faster. I don't understand why, unless they have vested interest," said the outspoken politician.

However, Shahrir was vague on the actual date of transition. He said it could be either 2009 or 2010.

"To be fair, he has already said he's going, so what's the rush?" lamented Shahrir. "Instead of allowing him to run the government, he is being distracted with talks of transition."

"This would not be a transition but a 'Get out!'. It will be a coup d'état."

### **Beware of what you say**

At the meeting with BN elected representatives, Abdullah reminded them of their duties to their constituencies, especially those from the five states governed by Pakatan Rakyat, namely Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor and Kelantan.

Among the issues he touched on were the representatives' role in understanding the Standing Orders so that they can debate constructively, the importance of servicing their electorate regardless of party or race and the need to monitor government-initiated projects.

He also reminded parliamentarians that the august house was not a place for them to make seditious statements and that they can still be charged under the Sedition Act if they make racial or religious statement detrimental to the nation.

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