

Najib: It's just a field trip
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Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak today described the retreat organised for Barisan Nasional (BN) parliamentarians as nothing more than a field trip.

He said the trip was not related to the opposition alliance Pakatan Rakyat's plan to take over the government on Sept 16.

najib rakan cop national service pc 150908 03"It is a programme initiated by the BN Backbenchers Club (BBC). It is a field trip, it is up to them, they can propose such a programme.

"It would be a good opportunity to expose BBC members," he told reporters after attending a Rakan Cop's national service function in Kuala Lumpur today.

The deputy premier has donned a national service uniform for the occasion.

The Star newspaper today headlined the BBC's planned overseas study trip, which is tentatively slated to take place over a two-week period, coinciding with the deadline set by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim to form a new government through defections to Pakatan Rakyat.

Meanwhile, Najib also took a swipe at Anwar. He discounted the possibility of defections and dismissed talks of a change in government.

"Anwar can claim all sorts of things. Never mind, we'll just wait when it comes to Sept 16. He'll probably say something else then," said Najib.

Earlier, BBC chairperson Tiong King Sing said the trip was the club's own initiative but rejected suggestions that it was organised in view of the Sept 16 threat.

According to him, the trip is to allow MPs to update themselves with the latest information about agriculture and high-tech food production.

Echoing this, Najib said the retreat was just an educational trip.

Not compulsory

Asked why the retreat was organised hastily, the deputy premier only said that the BBC has the right to organise any event at any time it wanted and that he would approve it if it was deemed to be constructive.

"They can do the programme anytime, this has nothing to do with (Sept 16). They can do it anytime as long as it is constructive," he said.

Najib also said the retreat was not compulsory and no disciplinary action would be taken against MPs who do not attend.

najib rakan cop national service pc 150908 01The deputy premier also appeared unfazed when asked if his position as the prime-minister in-waiting was now on shaky ground in relation to Anwar's takeover bid.

"I do not want to talk about it. Let them cross the bridge first, then we will see what happens," he replied with a smile.

On July 10, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced that he would hand over the reins to Najib in 2010.

In an unrelated development, Najib was also asked if disciplinary action would be taken against Bukit Bendera Umno Youth chief Ahmad Ismail, who has refused to apologise over his racist remarks.

The deputy premier, who is the Umno chief whip, said the next move will be decided at the divisions meeting.

"I have learnt that there will be the divisions meeting. So let it be discussed during the meeting," he added.

This afternoon, a special meeting of all 13 Umno divisions have resolved to back Ahmad and argued that he need not apologise.

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