

Najib : Taiwan trip not linked to defection deadline
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Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today rejected claims that 49 Barisan Nasional backbenchers have been whisked away for an

educational trip to Taiwan to avert potential defections to Pakatan Rakyat on Sept 16.

najib permatang pauh 260808 01"There is no link (between the trip and the defection deadline)", Najib told reporters today after officiating a conference on Islamic economics in Putrajaya.

"You are trying to make the link," he added.

After asserting that the BN parliamentarians are using funds provided by the Backbenchers Club (BBC) for the study-tour, Najib said "the BBC can do whatever they like as long as it is something that is productive".

"There's nothing wrong with having such a trip," he said.

Unprompted, Najib immediately lashed out at Pakatan leader Anwar Ibrahim for setting a Sept 16 date to form a new federal government with the aid of defecting BN members of parliament.

"It is more immoral to buy over people (than to go on the study-tour). It is subverting the principles of parliamentary democracy. They were elected on the BN ticket - they must remain BN supporters," he said.

49 mp back benchers parliament taiwan study trip klia airport 090908The first batch of 41 MPs left yesterday afternoon with another eight to follow today. The timing of has come under question as it overlaps the date on which Anwar (left) insists that a new federal government will be formed.

Yesterday, PKR deputy-president Syed Husin Ali and PAS secretary-general Kamaruddin Jaffar admitted that those on the Taiwan trip include backbenchers who are intending to cross over to Pakatan.

Their absence, therefore, will affect the date on which the 'new' government will be formed, they said.

'Wait for decision'

On another matter, Najib said he would reserve his comment on the issue of Bukit Bendera Umno division head Ahmad Ismail until he and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi meet the grassroots leader and can deliberate with BN component party leaders on a course of action.

Najib and Abdullah are scheduled to meet Ahmad today before the BN supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre at 2.30pm.

"We will have a meeting today and we will make a statement after the meeting," said Najib.

During a campaign speech for the Permatang Pauh by-election early last month, Ahmad allegedly made remarks containing an element of racism and sedition by questioning calls for equal treatment by the Chinese community given their 'immigrant' origins.

Ahmad was also said to have questioned the willingness of the community to share their wealth equally with the other races.

mahathir interview 050308Najib also declined to comment on speculation that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad would rejoin Umno, saying: "There's nothing formal. Just wait."

To a question on developments surrounding two Malaysian ships and their crew who have been taken hostage by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden, Najib ruled out military action as an option for their rescue.

"We are optimistic that we can find a solution," he said. He declined to comment further, saying even pirates may be monitoring the Malaysian government's moves in the matter.

"In these times of ICT, the pirates will know because they are also monitoring what we say here. So we cannot compromise the safety of the MISC ships. Whatever we do, it is best that we disclose it after we have succeeded, God willing," he added.

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