

PM : stop talking about transition plan
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who a day arrested three people under the country's draconian Internal Security Act, has brushed aside calls from within his own Umno party to step down, warning dissenters to stop all talk of an early leadership change.

"There will be lots of tale-telling. We want to stabilise the country's political situation with the intention and objective of paying greater attention to the needs of the people," he was quoted as saying by the New Straits Times.

abdullah ahmad badawi pak lah pc 050908 04" They want us to pay attention to their needs and we have to overcome the many problems that crop up from time to time, including economic issues. This is what the people want. The people do not want us to spend all our time politicking as then there will be no solution to their problems. This is one thing that all of us should think about if we want a stable situation."

Apart from internal party politicking, the embattled 68-year old premier is also trying to beat off a strong challenge from opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who has vowed to form a new government by Sept 16.

Abdullah, who took over from Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2004, is also president of Umno - the most powerful party in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition.

He has been blamed for the coalition's dismal performance during the March general elections and his failure to nip in the bud a recent string of controversies - including the rising outbreak of racial intolerance - has further undermined his political standing.

Najib backtracks on transition pact

Yesterday, his deputy Najib Abdul Razak backtracked on a promise made to his boss, saying he would now leave it to party members to decide on when they wanted a leadership change.

Najib had in July agreed to a much-criticised power transition pact with Abdullah, whereby the latter would hand over both the Umno presidency and the country's premiership to him in June 2010.

Najib's move comes hot on the heels of comments from International Trade and Industry Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who started the ball rolling when he called on Abdullah to rethink the transition plan earlier this week.

Muhyiddin also invited Mahathir, Abdullah's former mentor-turned-foe to return to Umno.

Abdullah's supporters have however lashed back at Muhyiddin - a party vice-president who was favoured to team up as Najib's number two until the transition pact scuttled his chances.

"I am sakit hati (heart sick). It is like a friend back stabbing a friend and can cause chaos among the Malays. My advice is, don't be a hero and make statements abroad. If you don't

like the boss, then you should quit, not ask the boss to quit," said Negri Sembilan menteri besar Mohamad Hasan.

"I believe if we discuss heart to heart, the prime minister can evaluate and think deeply on whether he should step down soon or not. But don't make him feel doubtful as a person and as the Malay leader," said Rafidah Aziz, head of Wanita Umno.

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