

Najib to decide later on running mate
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Deputy Prime Minister Mohd Najib Abdul Razak will 'wait and see' before deciding on his running mate for the Umno top leadership contest next March.

A day after offering himself as a candidate for the party presidency, he dropped hints today that he would probably choose a running mate based on the number of nominations received by the candidate.

Indicating that he would rather run together with a leading horse, Najib said the number of nominations can be used as a yardstick to differentiate between a serious candidate and an uncommitted one.

He hinted that it would be premature for him to pick a running mate since Umno divisions were yet to begin their annual general meetings and nominate candidates to contest for the various positions next March.

Najib was speaking to reporters after addressing a gathering with heads of federal departments and community leaders organised by Kedah Umno in Alor Star.

Umno's 191 divisional AGMs started today and will end on Nov 9.

Umno vice-presidents Muhyiddin Yassin, Mohd Ali Rustam, party information chief Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Pulau MP Nur Jaslan Mohamed have offered themselves for the deputy president's post.

Fulfill quota requirement

Due to Umno's democratic electoral process, Najib said it was natural for many members to offer themselves as candidates for various positions, especially the deputy president's post.

However, he said a candidate would have to fulfill the minimum nomination quota required to contest any position in the Umno top leadership.

Introduced after the 1987 bitter Umno presidential elections, under the nomination quota system, a candidate has to secure a minimum of 58, 38, 19 and 10 nominations to contest the positions of president, deputy president, vice-president and supreme council member respectively.

"I believe only serious and genuine candidates, whom members deemed fit, will finally prevail and secure enough nominations to contest," said Najib.

"Let's wait and see. It will be too early for me to comment on it," he said when asked whether he had decided on his running mate for the number two post.

Najib, the out-going Umno deputy president, had offered himself to contest for the presidency, to be vacated by outgoing Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Besides him, Gua Musang Member of Parliament Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Arau Umno division Youth wing's permanent chairperson Ismail Hashim, 43, have offered themselves to contest the president's post.

Asked about the offer from an unknown like Ismail, Najib brushed aside the challenge and quipped "he has to first fulfill the quota."

Meanwhile in George Town, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said Najib had to be given time to perform as prime minister before anyone could pass judgment on him.

He said the Umno premier designate had to prove his words when he voiced out that 'Umno needed to change, otherwise the people would change us' with far reaching reforms to the country's governance, legal system and socio-economic policies.

For a start, since he is now a full fledged finance minister, the DAP secretary general hoped Najib could distribute and share the national oil company, Petronas money equally for the benefit of all Malaysians.

"He should show a political conviction to implement policies to share the oil wealth with all Malaysians," said Lim.

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