

**Don't forget Pak Lah the 'cool'**  
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Umno president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi must be given a role in the party once he hands over the reins to his successor Najib Abdul Razak next March.

Former Sabah chief minister Salleh Said Keruak said Abdullah was a leader with vast experience, consistent and farsighted in his endeavour to bring the country to greater heights including the implementation of the Sabah Corridor Development blueprint.

"Although he was attacked left and right, Pak Lah (Abdullah) stays 'cool' and this is actually one of the attributes of a great leader.

"We must learn from experience - not to sideline past presidents of the party (Umno) to ensure continuity...stability and support for the party as the backbone of the Barisan Nasional government," he told Bernama today.

Salleh, a former three-term Umno supreme council member, said this was practiced in other countries to enable past leaders to contribute ideas for the betterment of their respective political parties.

"We must not forget that Pak Lah, as the prime minister, has led Umno and BN to secure two consecutive victories in the last two general elections.

"Of course the political scenario in the 2004 election was different from the recent general election but yet BN, under the able leadership of Pak Lah, won the March 2008 election," he said.

**Najib - the best choice**

Salleh said Umno needed to be restructured to accommodate past presidents of Umno to play a role in the party.

"I believe Pak Lah is not retiring yet from politics because he is still the Kepala Batas Umno divisional chief and member of Parliament for this constituency," he said, adding that Abdullah's vast political experience should not go to waste.

As for Najib, Salleh said the former was the right choice to continue his development agenda for the country.

In this respect, Salleh hoped the people and Umno members would give undivided support to Najib as Abdullah's handpicked or chosen successor.

Salleh, who was elected as the Kota Belud Umno Division chief, beating incumbent Musbah Jamli, the state assemblyman for Tempasuk, in the contest for the post, last Sunday, said his victory showed that democracy worked well in the party.

The former MP for Kota Belud, who is president of the United Sabah Bajau Organisation (USBO), said he would offer himself to contest a seat in the Umno supreme council.

"I hope I can contribute ideas to make Umno a caring party and relevant at all times," he said.

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