

**Najib calls for 'massive' change**  
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Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has called for "massive change" in Umno as it heads for critical leadership polls this week, according to an interview published Sunday.

Umno which has struggled to find its feet after the disastrous results of the March general elections a year ago, is seeking to plot its future at the March 24-28 general assembly.

Najib will replace Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Umno head, but many other top posts are up for grabs.

"This is the most critical time in the history of Umno and BN," the incoming leader said in an interview with the New Straits Times.

"We need to undertake reforms, be it in the party or government, as the people have given us the signals in the last general election - to change," he said.

"We need to accept this challenge by making massive changes to the party and the government."

Najib said that Umno must tackle corruption within its ranks and the perception that it is arrogant and self-serving.

Corruption was one of the factors that saw the coalition punished in the last general elections that handed unprecedented gains to the opposition, including control of five states and a third of parliamentary seats.

### **Helping the poor of all races**

Najib said there was no guarantee that Umno, which has governed Malaysia since independence half a century ago, would retain its dominant role.

"Other countries have gone through this (losing power). Whether Umno will go down the same road depends on what action we take now."

Najib signalled that the controversial policy of affirmative action for Malays, who dominate the population, should be adjusted to benefit the poor of all races. Malaysia also has large ethnic Chinese and Indian communities.

"If we want to help, it should be based on merit," he said.

However, Najib has recently said there will be no drastic reforms to the policy, introduced in the early 1970s by his father Abdul Razak, then the country's premier, to narrow the wealth gap between the Malays and Chinese.

Critics say the policy has failed, improperly benefiting Malay entrepreneurs who cash in on an array of perks, and that it is hurting the country's competitiveness at a time of economic crisis.