

Najib: Abide by decision on BN candidates
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Barisan Nasional component parties must abide by any decision made by the coalition's top leadership on the candidates chosen to contest under the BN banner at upcoming by-elections, said Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today.

Najib, who is also deputy BN head, said there would always be some differences of opinion as to which candidate should contest in a by-election as all component parties would feel that their candidate stood a better chance of winning.

"This is not new, especially when the constituency is made up of mixed races," he was quoted as saying by Bernama.

Ultimately, once the decision on the candidate is made, all components must abide by it and work for a BN win, he said.

Najib was asked to comment on the impending by-election for the Bukit Selambau state seat in Kedah.

Umno grassroots leaders yesterday suggested that the seat be allocated to the party, taking into account the high number of Malay voters in the constituency. The seat was originally allocated to MIC, which has also expressed its intention to vie for the seat.

Simultaneous polls

Asked whether BN would be able to handle two by-elections at one go, he said the coalition would accept whatever decision made by the Election Commission on the date of the polls.

The EC had said that it would hold the Bukit Gantang parliamentary and Bukit Selambau state elections simultaneously, provided it was satisfied that the incumbent assemblyperson for Bukit Selambau, V Arumugam, had resigned on his own accord.

The Bukit Gantang seat fell vacant after its incumbent, Roslan Shaharum, died of a heart attack.

"We are prepared to take on two by-elections. Our machinery can work in two constituencies at any one time," Najib said.

On another note, Najib, who is also finance minister, said the RM7 billion economic stimulus package announced on Nov 4, last year had been distributed.

He said the respective ministries were now handling the allocation and were going into the implementation stage of projects earmarked to stimulate the sluggish economy, due to the global economic crisis.

"It (the allocation) is now at the ministerial level. The ministries will now move to channel the funds for projects and allocations mentioned in the economic stimulus package," he added.

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