

Pak Lah: Stop pestering me on handover date
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today asked the media not to pester him on the date for the transition of power. Urging the media to be patient, he said it would happen in due course.

"Just wait. Don't ask me to say anything. All will happen when the time is right. The transition will take place," he was quoted as saying by Bernama.

najib mahathir pak lah umno 2009 agm final day 280309 08Despite having reiterated numerous times that he would hand over the reins to deputy premier Najib Abdul Razak, this has failed to silence the murmurs on the grapevine over the possibility of an eleventh hour surprise.

Technically, Abdullah's term does not end until 2013 when the next general election is due. But the premier has come under tremendous pressure to step down in the wake of last year's polls which saw the ruling coalition suffering a major setback.

Barisan Nasional lost control of five states and was denied a two-third majority in Parliament for the first time in history.

However, one of the states, Perak, was reclaimed in February after several Pakatan Rakyat representatives defected, paving the way for a political crisis which has yet to subside. Najib was credited with masterminding the coup.

Even in the just-concluded Umno general assembly, Abdullah assured delegates that he would be handing the controls to a younger captain and urged the party to back the new leader.

Giving the thumbs-up for the Najib-Muhyiddin Yassin combination, Abdullah said he decided not to defend his Umno presidency despite being asked to do so by various quarters.

On the same note, the outgoing premier said he would be meeting the king on April 2 to discuss the transition of power issue.

Opposition chided for attacking Najib

With the ruling coalition facing three by-elections in a matter of days, the continued uncertainty over the transition date will not bode well for Umno and BN, said an observer who requested anonymity.

"Many questions are still being asked and it has also paved the way for an endless stream of speculations," he noted.

"While the transition is being touted as a pact sealed in blood, everyone knows that anything is possible in politics. Surprises and last-minute decisions are the norm.

"There are still many in Umno and BN who feel that it is unfair to pin the blame on one man when numerous factors and people had contributed to the poor performance in the last polls.

"Furthermore, many do not see Najib as being the 'light at the end of the tunnel' either," he added.

Meanwhile, Abdullah also chided the opposition for launching personal attacks on Najib in their campaign for the upcoming April 7 by-elections in Bukit Selambau (Kedah), Bukit Gantang (Perak) and Batang Ai (Sarawak).

The coming contests will also be a litmus test for the Najib-Muhyiddin team.

BN is entering the ring with two by-election defeats behind them, one having paved the way for Anwar Ibrahim's return to active politics and becoming the opposition leader.

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