

Najib: Big battle ahead to wrest Kelantan

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TUMPAT: Kelantan Umno must stand united in preparation for what will be a titanic battle in the next election to wrest control of the state from Pas, the deputy prime minister said.

With Umno striving to end Pas' 17-year rule, Datuk Seri Najib Razak, the party deputy president, called on party members to quell all internal squabbling.

"We must aim towards zero internal squabbling within the party to ensure rousing success in the coming general election.

"We must convince the voters here of our ability to lead the state," he said at the Tumpat Umno division meeting here yesterday.

Admitting to rumblings within the party, he said members must not allow discord to affect the par-

ty's election machinery.

"Differences of opinion are unavoidable as our party practises democracy. Even married couples quarrel but we have our way of resolving these matters."

Najib also chastised party members who put their personal interests above the party's to the extent of hurting the party's electoral performance.

"This is our biggest test of personal sacrifice for the sake of the party. If we can overcome that, we can win.

"We can differ but not to the extent that we stay away from helping the party machinery in the general election.

"Don't stay at home and sulk if you are not chosen as a candidate, or work during the campaign only

if you get handouts."

Najib said the party leadership was serious about developing Kelantan, known to be the country's poorest state through several major development projects, including the newly opened multi-million-ringgit Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and the East Coast Corridor.

Earlier, Najib visited the family of RMAF Nuri crash victim Flight Sergeant Khusnizam Ariffin, 38, at their home in Kampung Bunut Payung, Kota Baru.

He promised to help Khusnizam's widow, Rohaida Junuh, 33, a teacher in Selangor, obtain a transfer back to Kelantan, the late airman's father, Ariffin Ismail, said.

Opening the Umno division in

Pasir Mas, Najib said weakness in the opposition parties was no reason for Umno to rest on its laurels.

He said there were signs that Parti Keadilan Rakyat would disintegrate following the resignations of its top leaders after its defeat in the Ijok by-election.

He said Pas ceramah were also not pulling in the crowds as they had before.

"Although there are indications that the parties face a bleak and unstable future, Umno must strengthen itself, increase its membership, and build up its spirit, knowledge and effectiveness.

"Don't rest on your laurels because others are weak. They might be working on their strategies quietly behind our backs," he said.