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# PM to work towards rehabilitating Umno

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**JOHOR BARU:** Acknowledging that he was one of the causes of the setbacks suffered by Umno and Barisan Nasional in the 12th general election, Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday said he felt responsible to now work towards rehabilitating the party despite calls for his resignation.

The prime minister also pledged to revive BN and Umno by delivering on his past promises.

Abdullah's stand came just after a pledge of support for him from all of Johor's 26 division chiefs, putting to rest rumours that Umno leaders in the state were going to ask him to step down.

There had been calls the past few days from certain Umno quarters for him to resign from the government and the party over the

ruling coalition's poor showing in the general election last month in which the BN, for the first time in its history, lost control over five states and a two-thirds majority in parliament.

"I admit I was one of the causes for these losses. I also understand that there are many things that need to be done. There are many reforms and changes that need to be done, such as reforming the judiciary, fighting corruption, reducing crime and improving the public delivery system.

"There are also other issues that need to be tackled that are related to inter-racial relations and religious freedom.

"These are some of the promises I made in the 2004 BN manifesto and I must implement them," Abdullah said after a meeting with Johor Umno leaders here.

Some of these matters were already being worked on, such as the

economy and reforming Government-linked companies, he said.

"I am responsible for doing all these. Some of it has or is being done while others take a bit more time."

Abdullah also hinted at changes in Umno as some of the policies that it helped put forward in the BN had led to the ire of voters.

"The party can be very strong, but the rakyat can throw it away over something which they cannot accept. Some of these things include issues concerning inter-racial and inter-religious relations."

Responding to fresh calls on Thursday from Kedah and Penang Umno leaders for him to resign, Abdullah said that was their view.

"Not all of them feel that way. But never mind. I have said before that I will not remain for very long.

"But I have a mandate from the people to continue, and I have a responsibility to rectify the issues

that led to our losses."

Before the start of the press conference, Johor Umno State Liaison chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman pledged the support of all the state's 26 division chiefs for Abdullah, putting to rest rumours that they were also going to ask him to step down.

On a related matter, Abdullah said Umno would look into suggestions that the system to choose general election candidates be reviewed as disgruntlement among its division leaders over the party's choices was a factor in the BN's losses.

"This system is based on consultation and has been the time-honoured practice. On the one hand, they (grassroots leaders) want the senior leadership to decide but when we decide, they don't agree with the choice.

"It is complicated but we will do our best," Abdullah said.