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# I will not leave party in disarray, says Abdullah

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday refused to be rushed into a succession plan, and said he would defend the post of Umno president in party elections in December.

The prime minister also dispelled any notion that the Barisan Nasional government was about to fall, by declaring that the coalition's Members of Parliament would defeat any motion of no-confidence in the Dewan Rakyat.

Rejecting calls from some Umno members for him to step aside soon in favour of his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Abdullah said he wanted a smooth transition and would not leave the party in disarray.

"Of course, I want the transfer to be smooth. That's very important. So when I hand over the party, it will be in order and not in chaos.

"I am not going to say to Najib, good luck, that's your problem, not mine. That's not the right way. I am not the type that will leave (the party) in the lurch just like that," he said after an hour-long briefing for BN's more than 500 MPs and state assemblymen.

Abdullah was given a stand-



(From left) Health Minister Datuk Liow Tiong Lai, Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein (centre) and Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong sharing a joke during a briefing for BN representatives at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday.

ing ovation after the briefing.

He said he went through a similar process when he took over from former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2003.

He denied Johor Umno had demanded that a succession plan be put into effect quickly.

"They said they were leaving it to me to decide. They made it very clear they would continue to support me, and that at the party elections they will be behind me and Najib for president and deputy."

Although several Umno personalities have asked Abdullah to step down, the grassroots sentiment is actually mixed.

"Some say it (the succession plan) should be done soon, some say not to hurry. There are so many views. This is democracy and everyone is entitled to speak.

"If we tell them to keep quiet, they say we are afraid. So let them speak," he said.

Abdullah, who up until yesterday had not spoken of his

intentions for the party polls, said he would defend his post against any challenge.

"Why shouldn't I contest? You tell me," he said.

He dismissed opposition claims that it would be able to successfully mount a vote of no-confidence against him when the parliamentary session begins on April 29.

"That's their claim. I am very confident BN MPs are loyal to the party and will vote for BN."

Najib said the transition of

power would be discussed by him and the prime minister when the time came.

"It is crucial that when this happens, it will be done smoothly, to avoid any problems which can arise when the transition of power takes place," Najib said.

Asked when the transfer should be carried out, he replied:

"It is not up to me. I believe the prime minister has the wisdom to decide the time and manner (of the transition)."