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Abdullah has my full backing, says Najib

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PEKAN: Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday pledged to support Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should the Umno president be challenged in the coming party election.

Najib, who is Abdullah's deputy in the party and government, said his stand was to ensure Umno's unity.

"As the deputy president (of Umno), I will continue to support Abdullah, the party president," he said after distributing financial aid to flood victims at a function here.

Najib was asked to comment on a recent statement by veteran Umno leader Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who said he was willing

to contest the party presidency in the elections later this year.

"Anyone can offer himself to contest any post but such an offer must be made according to the constitution."

Najib was also asked whether Tengku Razaleigh's statement was provocative given that Umno was still reeling from the election results.

"That is for the party members to decide. I will remain supportive of the party president. What is most important now is to strengthen our party."

Najib said both he and Abdullah were working hard to restore Umno's strength.

"Our efforts are concentrated on uniting the party and restoring its commitment. We should not be preoccupied with the party elec-

tions."

Najib said Umno was still a stable party.

"Our members must regain their confidence in the party's struggle. They must have faith in Umno being at the core of the country's leadership.

"What is even more important now is to know what we must do after suffering the shock (of the general election results)."

Najib, nonetheless, admitted that there were "differences of opinion" within Umno on what had caused its poor showing.

"The situation is still under control. I am confident our members are mature enough to put unity ahead of everything else."

Najib said other Barisan Nasional component parties should conduct a post-mortem on why

they had suffered losses at the polls and come up with solutions to regain the people's support.

On widespread rumours of BN members of parliament, particularly those from Sabah and Sarawak, being wooed by the opposition, Najib said it could be a ploy to create dissension among the coalition partners.

"They are just spreading such stories. We are confident they (BN MPs) will remain loyal."

Najib said elected representatives who were voted in on the BN ticket must bear in mind that the people gave them the trust because they were members of the coalition.

"If they jump to other parties, they will be betraying not only BN, but also the people who voted for them."