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# Leadership change will take place 'at right time'

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**KOTA BARU:** Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his deputy, Datuk Seri Najib Razak, have agreed on the proper timing for a leadership change.

The prime minister reiterated that he worked well with Najib and urged an end to speculation about their relationship.

"Najib and I have decided on the right time for me to hand over the premiership to him. We have no problems and we enjoy good working relations.

"The leadership change will definitely take place at the right time," he said at a luncheon with senior government officials and community leaders.

Abdullah had earlier chaired a two-hour Kelantan Umno meeting in which he said the leadership transfer was brought up. He is here for a one-day visit.

Najib said in London on Thursday that he would not challenge Abdullah for power because as a "true Umno man" he would not risk destroying the party his father had built.

The deputy prime minister said he was a loyal party member who subscribed to an orderly leadership change, as has been the Umno convention.

"It's important for everyone to see the relationship between me and Najib as very crucial to strengthen Umno and the government and to implement the development projects and programmes that have been planned," Abdullah said.

"I do not like for there to be differences on this subject. It is quite normal for such things to lead to failure and a losing spirit."

The prime minister also expressed gratitude for the support given to him to continue to lead the nation and Umno.

"I really value and appreciate the support given to me. If I am accorded solid support, it will spur me to work even harder for the party and the government," he said.

Abdullah urged party supporters not to be deterred by the results of the general election but continue to soldier on.

"As fighters, we should not give up or be frustrated in pursuing our struggle for the race and religion. The term 'disappointment' should not be in the warrior's dictionary.

"It's taboo for warriors to retreat before surrendering. Warriors must continue to soldier on. If you have already surrendered, there is no point in fighting; just wait to die," he said.

Abdullah said the government

was not weak despite the BN's failure to win a two-thirds majority in parliament.

"The present government must think of the majority support for us and this majority wants us to soldier on," he said.

The prime minister said he was confident that Umno would re-emerge as a strong party.

"I believe we can recover and return to our original strength. There are times we lose some seats and currently many people are angry but this will not be forever," he said.

This is Abdullah's first visit after the March 8 general election to Kelantan where the BN only won two of 14 parliamentary seats and six of 45 state assembly seats.

Present were the prime minister's wife Datin Paduka Seri Jeanne Abdullah, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Kelantan Umno chief Tan Sri Annuar Musa and Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor.

Abdullah said it was critical for the government to continue with programmes under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, now more than two years old, especially the efforts to overcome poverty.

He gave an assurance that government projects in Kelantan would continue despite Umno fail-

ing to regain the state.

"Although some parties have told us to teach the Kelantanese a lesson, we will not do it.

"Programmes, especially concerning the hardcore poor, will continue."

Abdullah said, at the same time, Kelantan Umno must improve the contents of its programmes in the state.

"It is not enough just to have spirit. They must also have programmes to win the hearts and minds of the people.

"Their spirits will be lifted if the programmes are successful," he said.

Annuar, who spoke earlier, said the state Umno gave its full backing to Abdullah and Najib notwithstanding the intention of Gua Musang division chief and MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah to contest the party's top post.

He said Razaleigh's decision was his right as a member of the party and he would be free to campaign in the state.

Later at a dinner, Abdullah said he would not do anything that could harm Umno.

"I will not let Umno be divided. In the north (of Peninsular Malaysia), Umno was founded by my father and grandfather."

Abdullah said, like his deputy, he would not do anything that could split the party.