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Najib: Transition must be orderly

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Razak said he feared Umno would break up into factions if leadership change in the party was not effected in an orderly way.

He said the factionalism would in the end further weaken Umno and the Barisan Nasional.

"This situation would lead to larger problems for the government and the country," he said after witnessing 19 deals between the Ministry of Defence and suppliers in conjunction with the 11th Defence Services Asia exhibition here yesterday.

Najib, the Umno deputy president, pointed to the factionalism that split the party following the leadership struggles of 1987 and during the crisis of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's ouster in 1998.

"The question is, can Umno and the BN afford to go through such a

situation?" he said.

Najib was commenting on former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's accusation that Najib was not brave enough to challenge the party president.

"It is not a question of being a yes-man or a question of being brave.

"I hold on to the principle that the transfer of power should be done in an orderly and respectful manner."

In reference to Umno and the country's history, he said leadership changes from Tunku Abdul Rahman onwards had always been accomplished in proper fashion.

"The precedent and tradition are already there. The method and manner have also been in existence and practised by the party.

"In my view, such a precedent should be continued when it comes to changing the country's leadership."

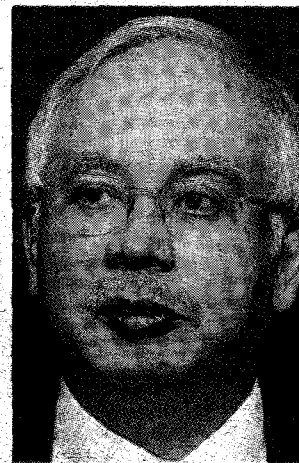
Najib said...

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Rais Yatim, whom Dr Mahathir mentioned as a possible competitor to Najib in the leadership stakes, said he had no intention of contesting for the top job.

"On the one hand, I thank him, and on the other, I'll say no thank you, I cannot take part in that kind of suggestion," he said in Putrajaya yesterday.

Responding to Dr Mahathir's comments, Umno information chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said that the present leadership had to be maintained.

"The people have decided in the last general election and this showed that they too have endorsed the leadership. There should not be any party pressing for a sudden change in leadership," he told reporters in Bidar, Perak.



“It is not a question of being a yes-man or a question of being brave. I hold on to the principle that the transfer of power should be done in an orderly and respectful manner.”

*Datuk Seri Najib Razak
Deputy Prime Minister*