

THE STAR

DATE: 15 / 04 / 2008

Reports by AUDREY EDWARDS, LOH FOON FONG, ELIZABETH LOOI and NURBAITI HAMDAN

Succession talks after party polls

The Star - 15/4/2008.

But no time frame for handover, says Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR: Talks on succession will begin after the Umno general assembly in December, said party president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Indicating that he is contesting in the party elections, the prime minister said yesterday that he and his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak would discuss the matter after the assembly, which will also see party elections being held.

However, he did not give a time-frame as to when he will step down

and hand over power to Najib.

"They have said they will leave it to me. And they clearly said they will continue to support me in the party elections," he told reporters yesterday after meeting MPs and state assemblymen from Barisan Nasional component parties.

He was replying to a question if there was a call from Johor Umno leaders for a timeframe for him to

step down.

"They will support me and Datuk Seri Najib as president and deputy president. Then I will think and discuss with him matters relating to the transfer," he said.

When pressed further if he planned to step down next year or in 2010, Abdullah said: "I cannot reveal that to you. Sorry."

He also dismissed talk of him not

contesting in party elections.

"Why shouldn't I contest? Do tell me," Abdullah said.

He also emphasised that he wanted a smooth transition of power in Umno when the party was in a "good condition".

"I do not want to leave the party in a chaotic state or tell my successor Datuk Seri Najib that this is his problem, not mine. That is not the way.

There will be a transfer," he said.

"It was the same last time during Tun Dr Mahathir's time when he handed it over to me."

On whether the calls for him to quit were coming from certain parties or the grassroots, he said it was "certain parties".

Najib told reporters at the same venue that the Prime Minister would discuss the issue with him when the time is right.

"The important thing is we do it in a peaceful and proper manner," he said.