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Najib: Abdullah didn't say when he will step down

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SUBANG JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has not expressed his intention to hand over power in 2010, said his successor-designate Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Deputy Prime Minister said Abdullah had not given any indication of timing as yet, adding that the announcement will be made "when the time comes".

Abdullah, who is the Umno president, had reportedly told Johor

Umno last week that he planned to leave office in 2010 and would discuss the transition plan with his successor Najib.

On calls on the ground for a timetable for the transition, Najib said that was not a call for him to make.

"I cannot demand. It has to come from the (Umno) president," he said.

"He has the wisdom to decide what is best for the party. I believe that," he told reporters yesterday,

after chairing an Umno management committee meeting with leaders from Selangor Umno to gather feedback on the party's performance in the recent general election.

To a question as to whether Umno members were agreeable to Abdullah contesting for the party presidency in the December party elections, Najib was non-committal.

He said that the members would only decide when the time comes.

"The main consideration is that

we remain united and work together as a team to revive Umno. We cannot afford to disintegrate from within," he added.

Outside the hotel where the Selangor Umno had its meeting yesterday, there were a number of banners put up urging Abdullah to step down sooner than later.

The banners read: "We love Pak Lah but we love Umno more. Speed up the transition of power to Najib and (Umno vice-president) Tan Sri

Muhyiddin (Yassin)."

Barisan had lost an unprecedented five states to the Opposition in the general election and a number of Umno members and leaders have blamed Abdullah for the dismal performance and asked him to leave.

On Monday however, Abdullah held a meeting with all Barisan MPs and assemblymen and when he spoke to reporters later he had indicated that he would stand for the Umno presidency again.