

THE STAR

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Calls for Pak Lah to go not right

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KOTA KINABALU: No one in Umno has the right to call for Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to step down as Prime Minister, party supreme council member Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said yesterday.

He said Abdullah, the Umno president, was also chairman of the Barisan Nasional, which was handed a majority in Parliament by Malaysians during the March 8 polls.

"What right has anyone in Umno to deny the wishes of the people?" said Nazri, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, after meeting senior National Security Council officials here yesterday.

He said that those who demanded that Abdullah step down were "foolish" and did not understand what democracy was all about.

When reporters pointed out to Nazri that among those who called for Abdullah to step down were his fellow Cabinet colleagues, he said: "Just because you are a minister, it does not mean you are always right."

He said that he was not surprised, however, that ministers were asking Abdullah to quit, as even a former Prime Minister was making the same demand.

Nazri said that the people now wanted the Barisan-led Government to administer the country, instead of "Umno telling the rakyat that Pak Lah is not fit to be the Prime Minister."

He said Umno should respect the people's wishes as without their support, the party could collapse.

On the upcoming Parliament session, Nazri reminded MPs that although they were granted a certain amount of immunity, this did not place them beyond the reach of the law if they uttered seditious, racist or sexist remarks in the House.

On security in Sabah's forward bases at the various islands in the state's east coast, he said he was satisfied with the situation, adding that the Government had approved allocations for permanent security bases to be built at islands such as Matating, Buhay Dulang and Sebatik.

He said that on average some 1,500 illegal immigrants were deported from Sabah monthly and the cost for rounding them up and deporting them totalled some RM6mil last year.