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Leadership change before elections, says Shahrir

PUTRAJAYA: The change in the Umno leadership can take place any time as long as Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has sufficient time to prepare for the next general election, supreme council member Datuk Shahrir Samad said.

Shahrir, who is also Johor Baru MP, believed the handing-over of leadership by party president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should happen before the 13th general election.

"Some people may think it is way too long and want the power transition to happen sooner. Well, this is just my view," he said when asked to comment on when the transition should take place.

"I believe the successor is quite happy to work with the Prime Minister. He is comfortable with the partnership," said the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister.

On calls for Abdullah to resign, Shahrir said the party was not leaving it to the party president to find

the remedy but instead, "we are doing it together."

In **AYER HITAM**, Johor Wanita Umno chief Datuk Halimah Sadique said the transition process must start now, and not after the party elections.

She said it must be done so that a new management would be ready after the party elections in December.

"We should not pressure the party president to step down but instead give him time to sort out all the issues before transferring power.

"He said that he would step down by 2010 during his meeting with Johor Umno last Friday," she told pressmen after chairing the Johor Wanita Umno meeting yesterday.

In **ALOR STAR**, Jernun MP Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir echoed a similar sentiment about the transition.

He said the leadership should not wait until after the polls following fears of a major split in the party if the top post was contested.



Media conference: Halimah speaking to pressmen after chairing the Johor Wanita Umno meeting at the Ayer Hitam Umno headquarters yesterday. Seated next to her is the wing's deputy chief Senator Syarifah Azizah Syed Zain.