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Dr Khir urges Abdullah to step down now

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PETALING JAYA: Umno supreme council member Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo has urged the Prime Minister to hasten the power transition plan - or risk pulling down the Deputy Prime Minister with him.

"Previously, I had written about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi needing to execute an exit plan as urged by many quarters, including Umno Johor," said Dr Khir.

"The transition does not seem to be happening anytime soon, creating a few possible scenarios - one of them being the loss of public confidence in Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak," said Dr Khir in his blog in an April 19 posting.

This is a likely scenario predicted by Dr Khir if Abdullah remains as the Prime Minister and Umno president until the party elections this December.

Dr Khir believed PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim would attempt an entry into Parliament via a by-election planned some time before the second parliamentary meeting.

"Bandar Tun Razak is most likely to be the chosen constituency. Incumbent Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim will make way because he has been made the Selangor Menteri Besar.

"As a tradition, Najib will head the Barisan Nasional election machinery. If Pak Lah continues as the number one, morale among Barisan Nasional and Umno members will be at a very low level, making it difficult for Barisan to win," said Dr Khir.

However, if Abdullah transferred leadership to Najib now, Dr Khir said it would boost public confidence in Barisan, as well as allow Najib to make changes in the Cabinet and party.

Having Najib at the helm, added Dr Khir, would reduce Anwar's chances of victory in the by-election, because the public would be willing to give Najib time to make changes.

On another scenario - that the opposition coalition would move a motion of no-confidence against Abdullah at the coming Parliament session - Dr Khir said it was unlikely as Anwar wanted to see Pak Lah remain in power and weaken Umno.