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Najib: Anyone can contest in Umno elections

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But it must be via proper channels

PEKAN: Anyone in Umno can choose to contest posts in the party but it must be done through proper channels and provisions.

Deputy president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said it would be up to Umno members to evaluate their choice of candidates during the party elections.

"As for me, being the deputy president, I will always support Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the party president.

"Both of us are working hard to rejuvenate the party and for this, we need solidarity and solid commitment among party members to focus on strengthening Umno rather than being carried away on matters pertaining to the party election," said Najib.

He was speaking to reporters after presenting a sum of RM704,000 in compensation aid to 480 traders whose business premises were affected by last year's floods.

Najib was asked to comment on Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's offer to contest the party presidency.

"Although we suffered a shock during the general election, the most important thing now is to determine the things we should do to recover from the situation," he added.

Najib, who is Barisan Nasional deputy chairman, said the coalition was also stable and that every component party must evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.

In **PUTRAJAYA**, Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said the party was a democratic organisation. He was responding to vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's statement that Tengku Razaleigh should be free to do what he liked as long as it did not go against the party constitution.

"Anybody can contest but it depends if one has the support of other members or not. At the moment, it is better to focus on strengthening the party," he said.

Tengku Adnan dismissed Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's suggestion that Umno set up a body of advisers for the party president.

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DATUK SERI NAJIB TUN RAZAK

"We have a political bureau and a management committee which channel their suggestions and advice directly to the president. There is no need to set up another body," he said.

In **KUALA LUMPUR**, Entrepreneur and Co-operative Development Minister Datuk Noh Omar said the strength of Umno comes from the unity of its grassroots, who must stay united during this challenging time.

"I don't understand why Tengku Razaleigh wants to offer himself as party president because if he is so great, he should stay in Kelantan and help. If he wants to rehabilitate Umno, he should focus on Kelantan first," the Tanjung Karang Umno chief said.

In **JOHOR BARU**, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mohamed Khaled Nordin said Tengku Razaleigh has the right to offer himself for the post of Umno president and Umno members have the right to reject the offer.

He said it would be preferable for Umno members to focus on efforts to resolve problems facing the party.