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Succession plan will be discussed, says Najib

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IPOH: Faced with Perak Umno's call for the party leadership succession to be expedited, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak said yesterday he would have consultations with Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on a succession plan for the party and government.

Umno has its own way, experience and tradition of carrying out a succession plan for the party and government, the Umno deputy president said.

"Let me and the prime minister have consultations on the matter when the time comes. Let the matter be discussed because the question of time and formula and so on have yet to be determined. Let the matter be discussed well," Najib said when asked to comment on calls by several Umno leaders for the party and government succession plan to be expedited.

He spoke at a news conference after heading the Umno management committee at a closed-door meeting with all levels of Perak Umno leaders at the Perak Umno headquarters here.

Besides Najib, the other committee members who attended the meeting were party vice-presidents Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Najib said the matter of the party and government leadership was raised at the meeting.

According to several Perak Umno leaders, the majority of those who spoke at the meeting called for the transition of power from the prime minister to the deputy prime minister to be expedited.

"We have our own way, experience, tradition and so on ... we are in the process of gathering views and will hand these to the prime minister," Najib said when asked to comment on the calls for the transition of power.

Najib said the prime minister had made known his views on the matter.

"Give him time to decide on the next course of action and the chance to set right several matters which he feels he should attend to," he said.

Najib said the management committee listened to the views and proposals of Perak Umno and the essence, among other things, was that efforts to rehabilitate Umno and the Barisan Nasional (BN) called for an orderly succession plan and a prudent and effective political strategy for the party.

"The approach to rehabilitating and strengthening Umno and the BN must be a comprehensive and holistic one which takes into consideration all matters that need to be addressed," he said.

An Umno divisional leader who wished to remain anonymous said there were heated moments

during the meeting when several of those who spoke cited the choice of election candidates and party leadership among the reasons for the BN's dismal performance in the general election on March 8.

Just before the arrival of Najib and the other management committee members, several banners were put up at the building including one which said "*Kami sokong Najib & Muhyiddin*" (We support Najib & Muhyiddin) and another which read "*Kami mahu pembaharuan*" (We want reform) and there were posters with pictures of the two leaders.

Kampar Umno division chief Datuk Mohd Radzi Manan said the party leadership should not ignore the voices calling for the transition of power to be expedited.

"Generally, the people and Umno members are waiting for reform and welcome the prime minister's naming of Najib as his successor ... the question now is when and how. The political tsunami has passed, now there is a strong tsunami within Umno," he told reporters after the meeting.

Radzi said the mood among the majority of Umno leaders and the grassroots was for the succession plan to be executed quickly in an orderly manner.

He also asked Perak Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali to give way to a "more dynamic" leader to rehabilitate Perak Umno. - Bernama