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'Work to ensure BN's strength'

SOON TO BE UNVEILED: PM readies Barisan Nasional leaders for the announcement of candidates' list

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday sounded his call for unity within Barisan Nasional as party leaders at all levels in the coalition were told to accept and support wholeheartedly, candidates chosen for the 13th General Election.

Reminding the leaders on the need to close ranks and work towards ensuring that BN was given a mandate strong enough for it to form a solid government at the national and state levels, Najib told them that they would know "within a few days" who would be among the 707 names to contest under the BN banner.

Najib said the list of BN's candidates was still being fine-tuned and those who would be making way for new faces had not been told that they would be dropped.

They were all the same given this message — "No one should make 'being a candidate' as an objective as the ultimate goal should be ensuring BN's strength".

BN leaders and members, he said must set their priorities right and focus on helping the coalition assemble a strong front to face the polls.

The leaders also heard from their chief that those who lost in the last general election, former opposition leaders who had since renounced their allegiance to their previous party as well as BN-friendly independents, could be picked as BN's candidate, if they possessed the required criteria.

"We will consider it ... But not all of them would be considered because we do not have any increase in seats (from the 2008 polls).

"If there is room, we can consider



Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak and component party leaders after the briefing in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

(choosing them to stand for BN). They need not join any BN component party as they could contest on a BN ticket," he said.

In an hour-long briefing to the leaders who include former members of parliament and state assemblymen, the BN chairman underlined several criteria of candidates who would be fielded.

Those chosen, he said would be those capable of serving the people well, possess a good track record and were well accepted at their respective constituencies.

Asking for the leaders' understanding on BN leadership's decision in picking candidates,

Najib said the selection to carry the coalition's name was a complex process to achieve the ultimate goal.

"In a few days time, I will tell you (about BN's candidates list) and give you the details

"I have spelt out the factors that the (BN) leadership takes into consideration in determining candidates.

"Among them are the candidates' acceptance by the people, capabilities, track record as well as a fair consideration among the BN components and those (wings) within each party," Najib said.

He added that the BN leadership was flexible when it came to factors such as the racial composition in constituencies, when determining

candidates.

The BN leadership in the candidate-selection process he said also took into account the last general election results as well as the current demography of the constituencies.

Najib also addressed directly the inevitable disappointment some hopefuls would face when the list is made known, telling the leaders that the party leadership could not satisfy everyone.

To those to be dropped, Najib said he would give them no more than 24-hours to "merajuk" (sulking).

"I said in my speech that if they (dropped BN candidates) are disappointed, they should minimise it to only 24 hours.

"After that they must 'turun padang' and be part of the machinery and support the party to ensure it wins," he said after briefing the estimated 2,000 leaders, at Putra World Trade Centre.

Najib also said there would "one or two" swapping of seats among BN component parties. **Additional reporting by Adrian Lai**



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