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# Umno pushes back party polls

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PM: Election postponed to avoid rifts and for Barisan to get ready for GE14

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KUALA LUMPUR; Umno has postponed its internal polls next year by 18 months to focus on the next general election.

This is so Umno can concentrate on serving the people, consolidating the party as well as help its Barisan Nasional partners get ready for GE14.

Party president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced this after chairing Umno's supreme council meeting at the party headquarters here yesterday.

He said the council decided to

make the announcement early to curb any attempt to create rifts within Malaysia's biggest political party.

"We don't want anyone to plan anything that can divert attention or create tension in the party. We want Umno to focus on party work which we have already given to the divisions in the form of Key Performance Indicators.

"This work should be our priority, and that is why we needed to make the decision to postpone now, or else there will be so much speculation."

The decision in theory allows Umno to hold its party polls after the next general election, which

must be held by mid-2018.

Umno, which conducts polls once in three years, last held its party election in October 2013.

Najib said the postponement was not unusual as former party presidents, including Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had done it.

Najib said Article 10.16 of the Umno constitution allowed polls at branch, division and supreme council levels to be postponed by no more than 18 months.

Vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the leadership had thrown the idea of postponing party polls to division heads

and 160 out of 191 supported the idea.

"Things are tough now and Umno doesn't need further tension," he added.

Supreme council member Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said he supported the decision as Umno needed a strong and united front for GE14.

"The supreme council weighed all the pros and cons. It will not make a decision that will be detrimental to the party," he said.

Kedah Umno chief Datuk Mukhm Tun Mahathir said he would abide by the party's decision to hold its elections later.

On a separate matter, when asked

whether any action would be taken against the Sarawak Report portal following the arrest of former PetroSaudi executive Xavier Andre Justo, Najib said the Government was waiting for a report from Thailand.

On Mara's controversial purchase of Dudley House in Melbourne, Najib said Umno wanted the matter to be fully investigated.

Asked whether the two Mara officials named in media reports about the purchase would be suspended pending investigations, Najib replied: "We must act based on the rule of law, that is a person is deemed innocent until proven guilty."