

## **Najib, BN leaders likely to discuss seat allocations today**

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**By G. Manimaran**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 15 — Despite declaring no snap polls this year, Datuk Seri Najib Razak is expected meet Barisan Nasional (BN) component party leaders here today to finalise the list of potential candidates and seat allocations.

The Malaysian Insider understands the meeting, a follow-up to last Friday's BN supreme council meeting, will likely touch on preparations for the 13th general election as the ruling coalition leadership had set December as the deadline for a final list of candidates.

File photo of Najib chairing the BN supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur on November 11, 2011.

The meeting will likely take place later today after the prime minister returns from last weekend's Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) summit in Hawaii.

"Tomorrow's (today's) meeting agenda is still unknown but Datuk Seri Najib wants to meet with us... possibly to offer his input and views on the question of candidates and division of seats," a BN component party leader told The Malaysian Insider.

"The time of the meeting will only be made known tomorrow (today) when Najib returns... but the meeting is not an indication that the election will be held this year," the leader added.

"I do not foresee any election this year, perhaps next year... but not this year, I am sure of it."

After chairing last week's BN supreme council meeting, Najib told reporters the 13th general election, which does not have to be called until 2013, will not be held this year.

He departed for Hawaii after the meeting to attend the Apec summit and is scheduled to return this morning.

"Datuk Seri Najib already announced during last Friday's meeting that he wants to meet with all component party presidents (the moment he returns)," the BN leader said.

Another leader said his party had already submitted its candidate list to Najib several months ago to be scrutinised.

"The names have been sent, not in the order of seats or constituencies to be contested as allocated in the previous polls, but a general, rough list for consideration.

"Perhaps after this, we will prepare a specialised list according to constituencies. Perhaps tomorrow's (today's) meeting will pave the way for that," the leader said.

The leader said there was a possibility of seat swaps among BN component parties, in view of the Election 2008 results which saw many parties lose in crucial constituencies in the peninsula.

Prior to this, Umno urged other BN parties to surrender seats they had lost to other parties

to be contested.

Najib had recently directed BN leaders to give special focus on the winnability of potential candidates as part of the pact's strategy to recapture its coveted two-thirds majority in Parliament and trounce Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in the states the opposition pact had won in 2008.

As such, the prime minister had also urged component parties to prepare its potential list of candidates much earlier than usually practised in BN.

"So we have prepared our potential candidates prior to this, and the finalised list will be decided on next month," said the leader.

The Malaysian Insider understands Najib summoned today's meeting as he is scheduled to attend the Asean and East Asia Summit this week and the Umno annual congress at the end of the month. He is also expected to go on holiday next month.

Although the next polls are not due until 2013, there has been growing speculation that Najib could call for snap elections this year or early 2012 while the country's economic growth is still relatively strong.

In dismissing the speculation, Najib however said last week that the BN meeting had merely discussed ways to strengthen the pact ahead of polls but did not deliberate on the timing of the election.

"We have also discussed about the importance of us returning to the spirit and (ruling coalition) Barisan Nasional's principles of respecting one another," he was quoted by Bernama Online.

The ruling coalition suffered its worst performance in the last general election in 2008 when it lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority and ceded control of five states by winning 140 of 222 parliamentary seats and 307 of 505 state seats.

The opposition led by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has struggled to build on gains made in the 2008 polls but analysts expect the next elections to be a tough fight due to voter frustration over racial tensions and slow political reforms.

Some analysts have said that Najib could call for polls sooner rather than later, to avoid a sharp slowdown in its trade-reliant economy as the global outlook deteriorates.

Malaysia's economy depends heavily on global demand for its electronics and commodities such as palm oil and crude oil, and a global downturn is expected to hit growth.

Economic growth is officially expected to moderate this year from a 10-year high of 7.2 per cent in 2010 due to difficult global economic conditions.

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