

Najib denies discussing polls at BN meet
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By Clara Chooi

TANJUNG SEPAT, Nov 16 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak dismissed speculation today that his meeting with Barisan Nasional (BN) party leaders last night centred on preparation for the coming general election.

The BN chairman told reporters here he had merely called the meeting to “exchange ideas on current issues” with the leaders, adding his busy schedule only permitted him to hold the discussion last night.

“It’s just a normal meeting. Nothing on seat division,” he said after launching the National Blue Ocean Strategy 3 housing project at an Orang Asli village here.

“We can meet at anytime. The only time I had was last night. This afternoon, I have to go to Bali. Last night was the only time I had,” he added.

The prime minister smiled and shook his head when asked again if he had discussed seat allocations with the BN party leaders last night, saying, “Why are you so interested? No, not yesterday.”

Najib called for a meeting with BN component party leaders at his official residence in Putrajaya last night, shortly after he returned from the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) summit in Hawaii.

According to Bernama Online, the two-hour meeting saw the attendance of Najib’s deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and party presidents Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek (MCA), Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud (PBB), Datuk M. Kayveas (PPP), Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon (Gerakan), Datuk VK Liew (LDP), Datuk Seri Dr James Jemut Masing (PRS) and Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan (PBS).

The Malaysian Insider reported earlier yesterday the prime minister had summoned the meeting to finalise details on BN’s potential candidates and seat allocations for the coming 13th general election.

“Tomorrow’s (yesterday’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 had told The Malaysian Insider. “The time of the meeting will only be made known tomorrow (yesterday) when Najib returns... but the meeting is not an indication that the election will be held this year,” the leader added.

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.

The ruling BN coalition suffered its worst performance in Election 2008 when it lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority and ceded control of five states to the opposition. It won 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 election to be a tough fight due to voter frustration with 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 Malaysia's trade-reliant economy as the global outlook deteriorates.

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