

Be ready for 'extraordinary' elections, Najib tells Umno
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 28 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak sounded Umno's rallying war cry for unity today, ahead of an election he predicted will be "extraordinary" for the ruling party.

The Umno president ordered top party leaders not to "take it easy" or "take lightly" the coming polls, saying they must be more "extraordinary" in their efforts.

"He requested that all division leaders and grassroots leaders work extraordinarily because this election is extraordinary... the challenges are more and he wants us to prioritise unity," vice-president Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said.

Zahid (picture) was speaking during a joint press conference with fellow vice-presidents Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal after a special pre-party general assembly briefing by Najib to Umno's top leaders here.

He added that Najib had also directed Umno leaders to resolve all internal conflicts to ensure there would be no sabotage or backstabbing when the polls arrive.

The defence minister said the message comes on the back of Najib's repeated reminder to Barisan Nasional (BN) members that only "winnable candidates" would be chosen to represent the pact.

"Conflicts must be resolved in order to ensure our success, whether in state seats or Parliament... So that there is no sabotage or backstabbing among our grassroots members," he said.

"The party president said (when selecting candidates) priority will be given to the leadership hierarchy but at the same time it depends on whether the candidate is winnable," he added.

He said Najib had also stressed on strengthening relationships between members by fostering the spirit of "love" and camaraderie.

"There is only one team — Team Umno," he said.

Agreeing with colleague, Shafie said it was imperative for Umno and BN to achieve a "comfortable win" in the coming general election.

"We need this to ensure our transformation plans can proceed," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Umno information chief Datuk Ahmad Maslan said the ruling party aims to recapture four key states from Pakatan Rakyat — Kelantan, Kedah, Selangor and Penang.

Umno is currently holding what is likely to be its last general assembly before a general election expected early next year.

Najib is said to need a marked improvement from the last polls to retain his position as only

a return of BN's customary two-thirds majority of Parliament can guarantee he remains in office.

BN ceded 82 federal seats and five state governments to the opposition in the landmark March 2008 general election.

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