

**Umno Will Not Claim Leadership In Penang - Najib  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today assured Gerakan that Umno will not claim the state leadership in Penang if the Barisan Nasional (BN) is given the mandate to rule the state in the next general election.

Addressing Gerakan's 40th National Delegates Conference at Menara PGRM here, Najib, who is BN chairman and Umno president, said he believed that there is still hope for the BN to recapture the state.

He said Umno is prepared to work together with the other BN component parties to wrest back the state.

"Umno will never claim the state leadership in Penang. We are prepared to work together with component parties in Penang.

"Gerakan, MCA, MIC and Umno must work together as one family. We must be part of the solution, not part of the problem. We must do that. If we work together, I am not going to give up on Penang," he told the 2,200 delegates when opening the conference.

Najib stressed that the BN must convince the people that it is the better choice for them.

"Some say that there is no hope (for the BN) in Penang. No. We must work hard, prove to them that we are the better choice compared to the opposition. This is about democracy; this is about choice.

"We must give the people a choice. We must show them that we are the better choice for them in Penang and for the people of Malaysia," he said.

Penang is now administered by the DAP-PKR-PAS pact which won the state in the general election in 2008.

Najib said he has already discussed the matter with Penang Umno Liaison Committee Chairman Datuk Zainal Abidin Osman.

At a news conference later, when asked whether Gerakan would lead Penang if BN were given the mandate to rule the state, Najib said he had to discuss the matter first with other BN component parties.

"BN will come up with our position later on. But it will not be an Umno candidate," he said.

When addressing the delegates, Najib said he could sense the upbeat mood among the delegates and expressed the hope that the mood reflected their spirit to face the next general election.

The prime minister said he wanted Gerakan to "rise to the challenge" and return to its glory days.

He said Gerakan should focus more on the future instead of reminiscing on the nostalgia.

"The past is the past. What happens now is about the future, near future. We want Gerakan to recover and be a force to be reckoned with in the context of national politics," he said.

In order to recover, Najib stressed, there was a need to present an alternative plan and line-up, particularly for Penang.

Although there would be painful and difficult choices to be made, he reminded Gerakan that the choice "not to do anything" was a lot worse.

"If you want to walk the talk, be bold. Take the moral high ground. Be prepared to walk the talk. It's the only way Gerakan can survive as a political party," he said.

When asked at the news conference about Wanita Gerakan chief Datuk Tan Lian Hoe's call for Gerakan president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon not to contest in the next general election, Najib said he would leave it to Dr Koh to decide on that.

"We have been discussing what needs to be done. I leave it in his good hands. He knows what needs to be done," the prime minister said.

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