

Najib: Umno will not lay claim to Penang leadership
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak assured Gerakan today Umno will never lay claim to the leadership of Penang should Barisan Nasional (BN) win back the state from the opposition at the next general election.

“Umno will never claim state leadership in Penang. We’re prepared to work with the component parties in Penang,” the prime minister told delegates at the Gerakan National Delegates Assembly here today.

“Each of us must offer ourselves to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. We must do that. If we do this, I will not give up on Penang.”

He said he had discussed the matter with Penang Umno and the state party leadership had agreed it would not seek to take the reins in the northern state.

But Najib, who is also BN chairman, stressed that Gerakan must work harder to wrest back the state from DAP and be prepared to accept “adjustments” to the current seat allocation system for the greater good of the ruling coalition.

He said Gerakan should not be trapped in the past and that it needs to make “painful choices” to meet the demands of the post-2008 political landscape if the party hopes to return to its former days of glory.

Najib later told reporters BN was now hammering out the details of potential changes to seat allocations but stressed that this amounted to tweaks and not a complete overhaul of the existing system.

“We are a big family so it’s more complex when we want to make any decision for an area,” he said.

When asked if the state leadership would remain with Gerakan, Najib said BN was still discussing the matter but reiterated that Umno would not seek the role.

Gerakan, which governed Penang for 39 years, was wiped out in the 2008 general election after losing in all the 12 state seats it contested while Umno secured 11 seats.

During the election, the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) parties of DAP, PKR and PAS swept up 29 seats in the 40-seat assembly with DAP leading the charge with 19 seats, followed by PKR’s nine and PAS’s one.

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