

Spell out 'winnability', Pak Lah tells Najib
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24 — Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi advised Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today to clearly define his idea of a “winnable” candidate to ensure the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) will be represented by only the best in the coming national polls.

The retired fifth prime minister was responding to The Malaysian Insider’s story published earlier today: “Can win-ability save Umno?”

With the 13th general election looming, Najib has been urging BN component parties to nominate candidates based on their ability to win in an election.

“Please give me winnable candidates; I don’t care whether they are old, new or middle-aged as long as they can win,” the sixth PM was quoted as saying in a New Straits Times report in January this year, before the Sarawak election.

Najib’s directive to BN members, including lynchpin Umno, remains unchanged, which appears to have stumped some of the leaders or caused clashes with those lower down the party ladder.

The Umno politician popularly known as “Pak Lah” said Najib is the only person who can set the members right in scouting for election candidates “as Datuk Seri Najib will be the one to decide on the candidates”.

Abdullah said it was clear the candidate must be someone who can win over a crowd. He later conceded there were issues with “parachute candidates”, a term generally used to describe those who figure prominently at the national level but are usually disconnected to the grassroots.

“You cannot take someone who happens to belong, or has a certain position, in the party,” he said, and added: “The winnable candidate must be able to serve the people... and most importantly must be a person of integrity.”

BN leaders shared with The Malaysian Insider that for at least the past 30 years, candidates have always been chosen from a party’s senior middle-ranking officers, which has sometimes affected the results in favour of the government in the ballot boxes.

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