

THE STAR

DATE: 14/10/2008

Pak Lah gives strong endorsement to Najib

The Star - 14/10/2008

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has come out with the strongest statement yet to back his successor Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"I want Datuk Seri Najib to succeed me, I want all party members to give their support to him and I believe he can be a good leader," he said.

The Prime Minister said he was happy that Najib received nominations to contest the party president post from all the 28 divisions that met on Sunday.

"Of course I should be happy because people are supporting him. That's very good," he said after delivering his keynote address at the US-Islamic World Regional Forum.

To a question on an allegation by *Malaysia Today* that Najib had allegedly abused his power and interfered in the investigation into the murder of Mongolian Altantuya Shaariibuu, Abdullah said he did not believe Najib had abused his power.

Abdullah said: "I can't believe that Najib would want to abuse his power. If he's the one who plans to abuse his power, how can he be my successor?"

"I believe in him, I believe he's a good person and he would be a good prime minister and would be able to provide good leadership, so I can't believe he would be involved in the abuse of power," he said.

On another matter, the Prime Minister clarified that he did not suggest a single multi-racial based

ruling coalition.

"The media misunderstood what I said. I did not suggest that all component parties within Barisan should be abolished."

He had proposed that those interested to join Barisan but did not wish to be associated with any of the race-based parties to be given the opportunity to become direct members of the ruling coalition.

"We can create a forum, a club or a branch. It is something we have to work at."

On Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's new deadline to take over the Government by December, he said: "They are always talking (about it) but never succeeded. It's all nonsense. They keep doing it because that's the only way to keep the interest running. I think they are wasting time."

He also believed Barisan Nasional MPs would not leave the coalition.

"Barisan emerged the winner in the last general election and we have jobs to do. We may have differences among ourselves and some are not easily resolved, but the fact is, we have been given the trust by the people.

"Not a small majority. Only 12 short of the two-third majority. We can form a strong government. Why should anyone leave to join the Opposition?"

Abdullah said the Barisan Government was strong and would do whatever it could to develop the country.