

DATE: 18/9/2008

THE SUN

Najib is finance minister

ABDULLAH TAKES
OVER DEFENCE
IN PORTFOLIO SWAP

The Sun - 18/9/2008



Abdullah and Najib strike a similar pose during their press conference yesterday.

by Maria J. Dass
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has handed over the powerful portfolio of finance to his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak as part of the country's power transition plan which is to be completed by mid-2010.

to save AIG
in rescue package for AIG, to take it from bankruptcy. The deal will save the company from being taken over by the ill-fated Lynch and Bear Stearns, in less than a year

AIG
Employees: 116,000
Operations in 130 countries
Assets: \$1 trillion
Write-downs: \$16.8bn

Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep
Sep 16: \$2.60

Abdullah, who also announced he would be taking over the defence portfolio held by Najib in a swap of duties, however, indicated that he may hand over the reins of power to his anointed successor earlier than the agreed deadline.

Speaking at his office after the weekly cabinet meeting, Abdullah said he had informed the cabinet of the job swap, and that over time, he would be handing over "a few of my roles and duties as prime minister to Najib".

The change comes at a time when the country is facing tough challenges, politically and economically, against the backdrop of a gloomy world economic climate and unravelling crises in financial markets (see related report).

Among Najib's first duties as finance minister will be to meet with fund managers and investors in New York where he is scheduled to speak at the United Nations General Assembly on Sept 25, Abdullah said.

"This will be an opportune time for him to meet with large US companies based in Malaysia and also meet

and speak with fund managers and investors on the economy and the country," he said.

Abdullah said he would concentrate on other duties pertaining to social and religious issues, racial unity, judicial reform and the reform of other agencies.

"I will slowly rescind my duties to Najib and see how well he adapts to his many new duties that he will be taking on from time to time," he said.

"I will slowly rescind my duties to Najib and see how well he adapts to his many new duties that he will be taking on from time to time."

- Abdullah

"The timing (of exit) is flexible. I will decide on when I want to go and tell Najib ... I will not be staying on beyond 2010," he said, adding that it was also possible that he may give up the prime minister's position earlier.

This matter will also be among those to be discussed at the Umno Supreme Council meeting to be held today, he said.

Abdullah also announced that the deputy chairman's post in Khazanah Nasional would be handed over to Najib, as this post came with being finance minister.

Najib, who was with Abdullah at the press conference, said the move demonstrated Abdullah's sincerity and confidence in him.

"The prime minister and I have agreed to that and we hope that the party and the rakyat will accept this in the interest of the party and country's stability," he said.

Asked what his plans are to tackle the current tumultuous economic situation and restore investor confidence, Najib said: "I will have to answer that when I move to the (finance) ministry, though we have discussed the current challenges at hand. Give me time to respond."

Both leaders said efforts were geared towards keeping and attracting investors via trade missions and meetings with investors and fund managers.

On page 2: Abdullah blames Anwar for economic woes