

'Not Umno's fault if Dr M outshone Fadzil at forum'

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Both had equal chances, says Najib

KUANTAN: Both the Umno and PAS presidents were given equal chances to reach out to the audience during the May 8 forum on Palestine, said Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

So, it cannot be helped if Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presentation got higher "ratings" as the contents of his speech managed to open up the people's hearts and minds, he said.

The audience could evaluate the speeches themselves, he said of the *Palestine and Humanity* forum which was broadcast live by RTM and where Dr Mahathir and PAS' Datuk Fadzil Noor each spoke for 50 minutes on the issue.

The forum was organised by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and the National Muslim Youth Organisation.

Speaking to reporters after opening Kuantan

Umno delegates' meeting yesterday, Najib said:

"If the whole thing is seen as a political test and PAS did not quite make it, it is not due to our fault.

"As such, it is unfair to accuse us as being the planner of the forum or using it as a bait for PAS and turn it into a political situation."

Najib was asked to comment on PAS' claim that the event had provided political mileage for Umno.

An article in *Harakah* had contended that Fadzil and other PAS leaders should have walked out from the forum.

On another matter, Najib advised members, especially those at the grassroots level, to be more open-minded and receptive to other peoples' opinions.

He said although there had been changes in this respect, there were still some smaller groups who

refused to do so.

He added that this did not go down well with the party's aspirations.

Kuantan Umno division chief Datuk Wan Adnan Wan Mamat, in his speech, urged members to turn over a new leaf and let past episodes remain a bitter lesson.

"The stronger the party is, the more challenges it has to face.

"All the strength we have must be used to fight those opposed to us and not to cause a rift within the party," he added.

Kuantan Umno held its divisional meeting last month after its suspension was withdrawn by the party's management committee in March.

It was suspended for about a year following claims of money politics during divisional elections by its former chief Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman.