

'Najib is stronger than Mahathir'
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Veteran newsman Abdul Kadir Jasin has risen to the defence of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, stating that the sitting premier is in a stronger position than Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he was in power.

He added Pakatan Rakyat's infighting over the Selangor menteri besar post further strengthens Najib's position.

Abdul Kadir said Najib may not be as strong as former premiers Tunku Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razak Hussein or Mahathir in terms of administration but he is stronger politically.

He said this is because it appears like no one is capable of challenging him for the Umno presidency and by extension the premiership.

"Even Mahathir, (left) who was so popular and performing well, was not as lucky or strong in the party like Najib.

"Not even five years into being the prime minister and Umno president, Mahathir was also challenged with the resignation of his deputy Musa Hitam in 1986 followed by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's challenge against him for the Umno presidency," said Abdul Kadir.

Abdul Kadir, New Straits Times Press group editor-in-chief for 12 years during Mahathir's rule, was responding to remarks made at a forum about Najib's predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong had said that Abdullah was a stronger leader than Najib as he had charted a direction for the country despite his failings.

Elaborating on Najib's strength, Abdul Kadir said it was "impossible" for Najib to be unseated as Umno president and even his closest possible challenger, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, has expressed that he was "tired" and was not up to a fight with Najib for the post.

'PM without challenge'

He said Muhyiddin (right) had recently "whispered" to him that he may become like many past deputy prime ministers who never did ascend to that office.

Abdul Kadir attributed Najib's advantageous position to his method of "playing it safe" despite criticism of his style.

"Najib is often criticised for supposedly playing safe. What people do not realise is playing safe has made Najib strong.

"He did not create enemies and has good ties with everyone. This practice of playing safe has brought him luck," he said.

He added if Najib appeared "soft" at all, it was to deceive his opponents.

As such, he said Umno and BN, even considered to be weak, can still rule, further assisted by Pakatan Rakyat's own weaknesses.

He said the rakyat had to choose the strongest from among the weak.

However, he warned that if leaders under Najib cannot manage the economy and security of the country well, the rakyat will still suffer.

"Najib may be strong, but the rakyat may not necessarily be strong too," he said.

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