

Dr M attends Umno meet, Najib urges solidarity

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UMNO AGM Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had Umno delegates guessing as to whether he would attend the party's annual general assembly, made an appearance this morning.

In his blog posting prior to the assembly, the former premier, who was reportedly unwell, hinted that he might skip the meet.

This immediately got tongues wagging that Mahathir would perhaps deliberately refrain from attending to signal his dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

The former premier had been critical of Najib, especially with regard to the latter's decision to repeal the Internal Security Act and plan to replace the Sedition Act.

Apart from Mahathir, this was also criticised by various quarters, including those from within Umno.

Mahathir had also panned Najib's debt-ridden brainchild, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

He also caused a sensation with his open reprimand of Najib, whom he pointed out had performed even worse than his predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Previously, when the former premier locked horns with Abdullah, who succeeded him in 2003, Mahathir had resigned from Umno and steered clear of its meetings.

In his opening speech, Najib, who seemed to be feeling the heat due to the pressure from within Umno, repeatedly stressed on the need for solidarity.

Meanwhile, Abdullah was also present at today's assembly at the Umno headquarters in the Putra World Trade Centre.

Najib's mention of the word "solidarity" was repeated close to 10 times.

'It is Tunku Abdul Rahman's desire...'

On questions as to why the government only wanted one date for independence day, that is, on Aug 31, Najib said the answer is "solidarity".

"That is former prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's desire, for us to celebrate independence day on Aug 31.

“But don’t worry, Sept 16 will still be celebrated as a holiday,” he said, humour evident.

Najib had also expressed his hope for all to be united under BN.

“Imagine how strong we will be, apart from winning the next general election, if we can together achieve a country that is more developed, in ties of solidarity that will never be broken,” he said.

On the Lahad Datu incursion, Najib said that the deaths of soldiers and policemen from the peninsula, together with those from Sabah in protecting the country, was proof of this solidarity.

On the MH17 tragedy, he said the evidence of the country being united in mourning was also a symbol of solidarity.

The Umno president also said he would discuss with all quarters in the party the creation of a post of vice-president post in Wanita Umno.

Saying that he had listened to the requests made by Wanita Umno, Najib added that the party must sit and discuss to find the best solution in order to strengthen it.

As for the requests by Umno Youth and Puteri Umno for more posts to be allocated for them, he said he would consider them, but the candidates must fulfil the criteria of Jil (generation) Umno.

“They must be tested, and the deputy prime minister and I will be the supervisors,” he said.

Najib had earlier outlined the criteria for the Jil Umno which are that they must be educated, skilled, trained with moderate values as well as retaining eastern values.