

Najib says Dr M can't dislodge him as he no longer has 'fear factor'

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Growing up with generations of Umno leaders has purportedly given prime minister Najib Abdul Razak an advantage over his predecessor former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In an interview with *The Sunday Star*, Najib said unlike Mahathir, he has grown up with the party leaders since first joining Umno at the age of 23.

"I don't just rely on the MBs (menteri besar), I am part of them and that is why Mahathir cannot dislodge me from Umno.

"I was short of my 23rd birthday when I entered politics. It gave me a huge advantage because I grew up with over two generations of leaders in Umno," he was quoted as saying.

The Umno president further claimed that Mahathir, who is now Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's chairperson, has so far failed to unseat him as he no longer wields the "fear factor" among Umno members.

"He ruled by fear. Once he was no longer president, there is no more fear of him nor the ability to control, and he could not determine things in Umno.

"There was respect but no fear," said Najib.

In the interview, Najib shared a conversation he claimed he had with the late Singapore former premier Lee Kuan Yew in 2009, who likened Mahathir to a "heavyweight boxer who keeps punching until he wears you out."

"He (Mahathir) is obsessed about doing things his way, it's his way or the highway.

"I thought he would go against me, what I did not anticipate was the meanness of his reaction," Najib lamented.

"I suppose that's part and parcel of what the man is about. Unless he achieves absolute control, he's not going to stop. Kuan Yew's analysis of him was spot on," he added.

Mahathir quit Umno for the second time this February after emerging as one of Najib's most vocal critics over issues linked to the debt-ridden state fund 1MDB and the controversial donation scandal.

His departure, along with former Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin who was sacked from Umno, had triggered a wave of resignations from among party grassroots to join Bersatu.

Najib, meanwhile, told *The Star* it was the "epitome of Machiavellian politics" and the "height of hypocrisy" that Mahathir is now sharing the stage with DAP stalwart Lim Kit

Siang and calling for the freedom of jailed former opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Najib also said he did not believe that the "strange bedfellows" will last for long.

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