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Najib: We need a strong mandate

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CRUCIAL ELECTION: Anything less than a strong victory for BN will lead to instability, PM tells Al Jazeera

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ANYTHING less than a strong mandate for Barisan Nasional can lead to instability in the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

This was because there was a need to continue with the current robustness of the country's stock market and strong showing by the ringgit.

Najib said this when asked about several analyses and polls that suggested a likely "hung Parliament" scenario following the 13th General Election on May 5.

"That is not a good outcome for the country. Anything less than a strong mandate will lead to great uncertainty.

"The markets, during the last few days, have become more positive.

"The stock exchange and the ringgit have grown stronger, so I think it bodes well for the general election," Najib told Al Jazeera's Veronica Pedrosa during the *Talk to Al Jazeera* programme, which started airing yesterday.

Last Friday saw the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI index close with a historic intra-day high of 1,711.29 points, while the ringgit rose 1.3 per cent to 3.0262 against the US dollar, its highest level since February, following a huge inflow of foreign funds.

During the interview, Najib stressed that what he wanted was stability for the country.

"I believe the country has so much potential. Anyone who

wants to work constructively with me, I will welcome.

"But if you embark on policies that undermine the future of Malaysia, then that is something else."

Najib admitted that the elections would be a "hard-fought and robust" event, and was reflective of the country's maturing democratic process.

"I am cautiously optimistic that the voters will return BN back into Parliament."

On the ongoing campaigning period, Najib said he wanted it to focus more on policies and become a platform to determine what kind of direction to take or leaders the people wanted to elect.

During the 30-minute pre-

recorded interview, Najib offered opinions on topics ranging from the incursion in eastern Sabah to the controversy surrounding the selection of BN-friendly candidate, Datuk Zulkifli Noordin, for the Shah Alam parliamentary seat.

He spoke about his early start in politics and explained how he only began serving the people following the death of his father, Malaysia's second prime minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein.

"I had to do it my way, albeit with a family name. I had to fend for myself and show that I could stand on my own."

Najib touched on the differences between the manifestos of BN and the opposition.

He said a study of the opposition's manifesto proved that its implementation would lead to "catastrophe" as the national deficit could reach 11.5 per cent

within the first year.

"The opposition's manifesto is fiscally irresponsible, not doable and populist."

Najib also denied claims that Umno was an unpopular party among those who were not part of it, adding that such an opinion was in contrast with his own popularity as prime minister.

He said Umno was among the strongest parties in the ruling coalition, with 3.2 million members.

"To change a big party will take time. It is on track to change and we can see it with the (fielding of) new faces and candidates."

He said it was up to Umno divisional leaders to adapt to changing times and get the support of those who were "not their customers" or traditional supporters in order to give the party a broader appeal.

