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'I won't bow to pressure to quit'

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DEMOCRATIC MANDATE: Najib says he has backing of 3 million Umno members

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will not bow to pressure to resign as he had the backing of three million Umno members.

Speaking to 1,000 Umno Kota Melaka division members yesterday, Najib, who is also Umno president, said he was chosen democratically

and would not relinquish his post because of one person.

"(Just because) one person tells me to go, I will not bow down. I know I have the support of three million Umno members with me," he said, in a veiled reference to former prime minister and Umno president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who in recent weeks, had been critical of Najib's leadership.

Taking another swipe at Dr Mahathir, Najib said he had been elected to the party's presidency under a

system that was more democratic than previous years.

"Some people said I was not smart for omitting the quota needed to contest the party's presidency. Under the previous constitution, you needed 63 divisions to nominate you as a candidate for the post.

"Do you know how difficult it is to win 63 divisions? I could have been president for 23 years, because who was going to challenge me?"

"I wanted our party to be more inclusive and democratic. I left my fate to 160,000 Umno members and they chose me.

"I was chosen democratically. I am not arrogant but I have been entrusted by Umno members to lead the party," he said.

Najib also said the allegations over Malaysia Development Bhd was not a defining issue and that party members should refocus on its main struggles, which were to uphold Islam and enhance the people's well-being.

"The people want food on the table, a roof over their heads, earn a halal income and provide education for their children. These are the things we must focus on."

He said as party president, he knew the responsibility he bore and called on the party members to continue supporting his leadership in order to ensure Umno remained strong and capable.

"I know the weight on my shoulders. It has taken me 38 years to get

to this position. Politics is not an upwards graph — there will be good times and bad times, just like in life and marriage.

"We cannot just support our leaders in good times, and abandon them during the bad."

His biggest fear, he said, was for Umno to fall apart as it would greatly affect the fate of the Malays.

"Without Umno, the Malays are damned (terbangsatlah bangsa Melayu)."

Najib later officiated the Umno Kota Melaka delegates meeting. Present were Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron and Deputy Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Mas Ermeyati Samsudin, who is also Puteri Umno chief.