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PM: Defend Umno presidency

'Institution's sanctity must be protected to weather storms'

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GERIK: Umno presidency must be defended at all times if the party is to overcome crises, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said defending the presidency was not about protecting the individual who is the president but more about looking after the sanctity of the institution.

"For Umno to survive and come out of any crises intact, the presidency and the Prime Ministership are the two institutions that must be protected," he said at the opening of Gerik Umno division meeting.

Najib said that Umno had endured "many storms" before but the party survived the challenges because members were behind the president.

He said Umno faced many challenges during Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's 22 years of presidency but members had given the former prime minister undivided support and that is why issues were resolved.

He cited an example of the Team

A and Team B crisis where the party president had won by just 41 votes and the deregistration of Umno, saying that it had been trying times for the party but because everyone was united, the matter was resolved.

"During the 1999 general election, I too was affected by the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and won by a small majority of 241 votes. But because I had the support of the party and the division, I won the 2004 election by some 22,000 votes.

"My point is that if we are confident of the leadership, be united and move as one, any crisis, be it big or small, Umno can overcome it," he said.

Najib pointed out that as Umno president and Prime Minister, he had the interest of party members and the people in whatever action and decision he made, including providing funds to the party during elections.

"Whatever I do is based on law. I will never do anything that is



Guest of honour: Najib being greeted by Gerik Umno members upon his arrival at the division's meeting in Perak.

against the law," he said.

The Umno president also questioned Dr Mahathir's claim that he only spent RM10mil for elections during his premiership, adding that according to his calculation, RM41.14mil would have to be forked out to contest for the 193 parliamentary and 394 state seats in the 1999 election.

He said the figure was based on the RM5.000 and RM3.000 deposits respectively for parliament and state candidates as well as the RM100.000 and RM50.000 election expenditures permitted.

"Going by the amount, we would have spent more than RM41mil in 1999. This does not include other costs incurred.

"I have to correct this fact to avoid confusion. Ifs all right to criticise me but if the numbers are wrong, I need to rectify it said Najib said.