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Confident Najib rips critics

Convinced that Umno members are tired and want to move on after the year-long attacks by Mahathir, the party president goes into counter-attack mode.

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DATUK Seri Najib Tun Razak's Umno presidential address today could be one of the most important speeches in his political career.

But there is a possibility that it just might be somewhat overshadowed by the fact that Najib will be coming face to face with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the first time in months.

The media will go crazy for a shot of them together - that is, if it happens.

At last year's general assembly, Dr Mahathir was unhappy with the presidential speech and left immediately after the opening without bothering to join the VIPs for tea.

With ties between the two men at rock bottom, there could be a repeat performance.

When asked what he will say when he meets Dr Mahathir, Najib laughed and replied: "I haven't figured that out yet."

Then, on a more serious note, he added: "Umno is tired of all this, I could see last night how tired they were. To be honest, I am also tired of it."

Najib has been very circumspect about Dr Mahathir throughout the last year of attack after attack.

But the floodgates finally opened on Tuesday night and he let it all out at the pre-Umno general assembly briefing for Umno delegates.

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Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak

Malaysia as a failed state and even a "beggar state".

He came with infographics to show his economic track record in his six years as Prime Minister.

He cited GDP and FDI figures and the Bursa Malaysia index, all of which had improved under his administration.

He told the delegates that Malaysia is ranked 18th in world competitiveness and that the Rohingya kiss the ground when they arrive in Malaysia.

He explained how Dr Mahathir had blown up IMDB from a business and cash flow issue into a



Striking back: Najib has been particularly upset by the way Dr Mahathir has painted Malaysia as a failed state.

political issue, and he told them that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission had even gone to the Middle East to interview the donors of the RM2.6bn political fund.

The bulk of his briefing centred on rebutting the allegations by Dr Mahathir.

The empty seat between Najib and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was a glaring reminder of the discord between Najib and his deputy pres-

ident Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

However, vice-president Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal was there, looking rather downcast and lost amid a crowd that was overwhelming for Najib.

Najib told the delegates that he had to drop Muhyiddin from the Cabinet because the trust and cooperation between them was gone.

He used an analogy from his father, former prime minister Tun Razak Hussein.

Najib said when his father learnt that he had leukaemia, Razak trusted only his wife and his then deputy Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman with the news.

His deputy, however, died first from a heart attack and carried the secret to the grave.

That, said Najib, was the level of trust between the then prime minister and his No.2.

Basically, Najib did not appreciate the way his former No.2 had taken issues from inside the Cabinet out into the open.

"It was a frank and convincing account, and the mood in the hall was tremendous. We have been waiting a long time for this.

"I don't think the Prime Minister would have been able to talk like that five months ago, but he is on a more confident footing.

"He has the numbers in Parliament, the supreme council is with him and he has the support of more than 70% of the Umno division leaders," said Kapar Umno division chief Danik Faizal Abdullah.

Najib has also been buoyed by the success of the Asean Summit that saw him playing host to world leaders.

At the start of the briefing, Najib had said: "I am a patient man. I seldom blow my top but all these baseless accusations are too much. I cannot keep quiet anymore."

Timing is everything in politics. Dr Mahathir has had his say for one long year and it is now Najib's turn to speak.