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# 'I have the mandate to lead'

Najib: No one can tell me to step down as long as people support me

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TAWAU: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is righting his detractors, saying he is not afraid of recent attacks against him and will continue serving as long as he still has the people's support.

"I was elected Prime Minister in a democratic way and no one individual has the right to ask me to step down," Najib said as he took a swipe at former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his speech at a massive solidarity gathering with the people in this Sabah east coast town yesterday.

Not holding back his punches, Najib said: "I have the mandate and I will continue my struggle for the people.

"Today, 40,000 people gathered here are undivided in their support for me. This voice is bigger than the voices of one or two individuals. Who are they to decide that I should step down?"

"No individual has the right to ask the removal of a democratically elected leader," he said a day ahead of Umno's 69th anniversary celebrations today.

He said Dr Mahathir remained prime minister and Umno president for 23 years because the party gave him full support no matter what crisis hit his administration.

"If Umno had not given him the support, would he have lasted 23 years as president and prime minister?" Najib asked.



Strong support: Najib being given a warm welcome as he arrives for the solidarity gathering in Tawau. — Bernama

He added that it was Dr Mahathir who said during the 1987 Umno leadership challenge by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah that even if he won by one vote, he was still president of Umno.

"He had only 50% of the party members' support at that time," said Najib, in urging Dr Mahathir not to forget the support given by Umno to him during 23 years in power.

On Dr Mahathir's claims that IMDB was losing money, he said that it was only a matter of time

for the sovereign fund to solve its problems.

He said Tabung Haji's plan to buy land from IMDB was an investment and not a bailout.

"Because of the controversy raised, I advised Tabung Haji to sell the land," he said.

Najib added that the Government did things for the benefit of the people and the country and he appreciated the strong support he received from the people in Sabah.

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman, who is also Sabah

Umno chairman, assured the Prime Minister that they were fully behind him at the event organised by Kalabakan Umno chief Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh.

Najib later said the target to build one million affordable houses by 2018 was on track. As of last year, 95,000 had been completed and occupied. Another 42,800 were being built.

"We have another 250,000 units that are at various stages of implementation and we believe the target set is do-able," he said.