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## Dr M admits Najib cannot be unseated

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad conceded yesterday that chances of unseating Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak before elections in 2018 are slim, despite his rallying cries for a "people's power" movement to topple the country's leader.

The 90-year-old statesman has called on Najib to step down following allegations of corruption and mismanagement of Malaysia Development Bhd (IMDB).

But Dr Mahathir said Umno lawmakers were protecting Najib and slammed them for not speaking up.

"All of them are scared and they look after their own safety. They're not looking after the party, the nation. It's about themselves," he said at his office here yesterday. The way he's going, he might go full term."

Dr Mahathir was once Najib's patron but had turned against him in 2013 by criticising the government's economic policies and Mendliness

with the West.

The former leader demanded Najib step down after it was reported in July that investigators looking into alleged wrongdoing at IMDB had traced a payment of RM2.6 billion going into the prime minister's personal bank accounts.

Najib had denied taking money for personal gain.

The fallout from the allegations has scared away foreign investors, adding to pressure on the country's economy that was already suffering from falling commodity prices.

Opposition leaders called on lawmakers to reject the 2016 Budget that Najib would present to Parliament today as a show of no confidence against him.

But Dr Mahathir said such measures would fail as the opposition did not have the numbers to challenge the ruling coalition.

"The fact is that the opposition is not able to gather enough people to support that. So the government,

with more support in parliament, will push it (the budget) through."

He said Umno lawmakers were scared of Najib taking action against them. Najib had previously cracked down on dissenters in his government, ousting his deputy, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, and other ministers critical of his governance in a cabinet reshuffle earlier this year.

He also replaced the Attorney-General, who was leading an investigation into IMDB.

Dr Mahathir said he believed Muhyiddin could lead the country, if Najib were to go.

"The former deputy prime minister would be able to lead the country, provided he listens to good advice... people with experience."

He said he was concerned following reports that police were investigating him for allegedly making defamatory comments against Najib during the Bersih 4 rally.

"I fear, not because of anything, but because of manipulation of justice, manipulation of the law. Otherwise, according to the law, I have done nothing wrong." **Reuters**

