

Newspaper
Date

New Straits Times
21 February 2016

Najib: I helped Umno Baru survive

SUPPORT: As Youth chief in 1987, he oversaw recruitment of thousands of members for party

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UMNO president Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday reminded critics that the party had survived its leadership crisis in 1987 because of the actions of Umno Youth which was then led by him.

Najib said more than half of Umno members had rejected then party president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and that only the Youth wing had supported his leadership.

"When Umno was outlawed in 1987, more than half of Umno rejected him (Dr Mahathir). Only the Youth wing supported him.

"The party divisions did nothing

to recruit members into Umno Baru, which Dr Mahathir founded in the aftermath of the crisis."

Najib said Umno Youth had organised a recruitment drive and persuaded thousands of people to join the fledgling party.

"Otherwise, Umno Baru would have been stillborn. The party survived because of Umno Youth's contributions," said Najib, who served as its chief from 1987 to 1993.

Najib said this during a dinner commemorating his 40 years of involvement in politics at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

This follows a string of criticisms by former prime minister Dr Mahathir against Najib's leadership as Umno president and prime minister.

Dr Mahathir had, among others, criticised Najib over the latter's handling of 1Malaysia Development Bhd, and the RM2.6 billion donation that was deposited into the latter's account.

"If you want to criticise, do it the right way. Don't criticise and destroy the party at the same time. We are facing enemies outside. Let us not



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi at a thanksgiving event in conjunction with his 40 years in politics at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Khairull Azry Bidin

have enemies inside (Umno)."

Issuing a stern warning to his detractors, Najib said he would act against anyone who "crossed the line".

"Maybe I'm a patient person, but

my patience has its limits. Don't think you can do anything and not expect me to react if you cross the line.

"When I act, it will be based on facts. My actions will be for the interests of the party and country," he

said to resounding applause from the crowd.

Present were 500 of Najib's close friends and former Umno Youth colleagues, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jafil and Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.

In an apparent response to attempts to remove him as prime minister, Najib pointed out that he had never tried to topple a political leader from power.

"Throughout my career, I contested only when there was an opening for a position in Umno.

"My father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, was the one who built Umno. I will not be the son who destroys it. That is the principle I live by."

Najib, who is Pekan member of parliament, is scheduled to visit his constituency today to launch Universiti Automotif DRB-HICOM.

He will visit veteran Umno member Tengku Datuk Ibrahim Engku Sulaiman at his home, before launching Universiti Malaysia Pahang's main campus in Kuala Pahang.

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