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'Dr M no longer commands fear'

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'MACHIAVELLIAN': Najib says former prime minister was obsessed with doing things his way

KUALA LUMPUR

FORMER premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad does not wield any "fear factor".

This is partly the reason behind his failure to unseat Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

"He ruled by fear. Once he was no longer Umno president, there was no more fear of him nor the ability to control, as he could not determine issues in Umno. There is respect, but no fear," said the prime minister in

an exclusive interview with the *Sunday Star*.

He said Dr Mahathir's control of Umno was largely by virtue of being the then party president and prime minister, as well as operating through *menteri besar* (MB) and chief ministers to control party divisions.

"Once MBs were no longer there, he had no contact with division heads.

"You'd be surprised to know that he didn't even know many of their

names," Najib said in his interview, which is in conjunction with the Umno General Assembly, which takes place this week.

Najib said he did not rely on MBs, but rather, was part of them. It was for this reason, he said, that he could not be dislodged from Umno.

"I was short of my 23rd birthday when I entered politics. It gave me a huge advantage because I grew up with over two generations of Umno leaders," he was quoted as saying by the English newspaper.

Najib also shared a conversation he had with the late Lee Kuan Yew in 2009, who likened Dr Mahathir to a heavyweight boxer who kept punching until his opponent was worn out.

"Dr Mahathir was obsessed about doing things his way. It's his way or the highway.

"I thought he would go against me. What I did not anticipate was the meanness of his reaction," he said, adding that the late Singaporean leader's analysis of Dr Mahathir

was spot on.

Najib said it was the "epitome of Machiavellian politics" and the "height of hypocrisy" that Dr Mahathir was now sharing the stage with his one-time political nemesis Lim Kit Siang and shaking hands with his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Do you think it's for the love of Kit Siang? Do you think Kit Siang loves Mahathir?"

Najib believed that the "strange bedfellows" would not last long.