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Najib dismisses rift rumours

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PM: Hisham's new role was discussed many months prior with DPM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has quashed talk of a rift between his two Umno vice-presidents, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

Hishammuddin was appointed on Wednesday as Minister with Special Functions in the Prime Minister's Department in addition to his current post as Defence Minister, triggering allegation by Opposition figures that the move was politically motivated to shore up Hishammuddin's position.

Moving in to clear the air at the launch of Barisan Nasional's JR Plus (Jalinan Rakyat Plus) political machinery attended by thousands of Umno and Barisan component party members at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday, the Prime Minister said the two remained close.

He jokingly said that the only thing the two haven't done was to kiss each other.

"Our main generals must be in one solid and strong team, each trusting the other. There must not be anyone who tries to pit Hishammuddin against Zahid," Najib said.

He explained that when he announced Hishammuddin's appointment, he had discussed the matter for months with Dr Ahmad Zahid, who is Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister.

Najib also launched the JR Plus, a team of 250,000 members from Wanita Umno, 60,000 from Umno Youth and additional members from Puteri Umno, Barisan component parties and pro-Barisan NGOs.

Najib described JR Plus as Barisan's political firepower for the 14th General Election, and said he was satisfied with the high spirits in Umno and Barisan.

He also reminded Barisan component party members to work



Altogether now: Najib launching the JR Plus political machinery at PWTC, Kuala Lumpur. Flanking him are Dr Ahmad Zahid and Wanita Umno chief Tan Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil. — Bernama

hard to win over voters.

Advising them to be humble, Najib said they should not drive fancy and luxury cars when they went down to meet people in villages.

"If you have a Bentley or a Porsche, don't bring it to the *kampung*. Be simple including in your dressing. If you can, wear a *kain pelikat* (sarong).

"When we meet the *rakyat*, what's wrong with eating at foodstalls with them? I do that, and the food at the stalls is actually better than at some five-star hotels," he said.

He also told them to woo younger voters so that Umno and Barisan would not be seen as the party of the past.

"We must be seen as the party of the past, the present and future," he said.



Excellent move: MCA president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai talking to Wanita MCA representatives at the launch of JR Plus in Kuala Lumpur. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star