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The ties that bind – Najib and DPM relationship solid

VERY few things in Umno happen without a purpose and it was no coincidence that the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister were together on stage at the Masjid Tanah Umno division annual general meeting (AGM).

No one could quite recall the top two ever attending an Umno division AGM at the same time and it was to show that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad can say what he likes, the political partnership between the top two is intact.

In fact, the Masjid Tanah affair was akin to a love fest. Masjid Tanah Umno chief Datuk Seri Rauf Yusoh pledged his division's loyalty to the top two. He told them: "You are not alone. We are with you."

Rauf is also the party's executive secretary, the man who can make things happen and he had put up a grand welcome for Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Masjid Tanah is like a second home to Dr Ahmad Zahid because it is where his wife Datin Seri Hamidah Khamis comes from.

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Moreover, the division AGM was held on the grounds of a private religious school and mosque built on land bequeathed by Hamidah's late father.

Masjid Salmah Khamis is named after her parents and when the day comes, the couple intends to be buried in the burial grounds nearby.

It is a beautiful piece of land – the school built six years ago stands on a low hill while the mosque is surrounded by a man-made pond.

It is efforts like this which makes it so difficult to challenge Umno for the hearts and minds of the Malays.

Najib, in his speech, had described the land as "*hak milik buah hati Datuk Seri Zahid*" (the belonging of Dr Ahmad Zahid's wife).

"I am told the 3-Ms came here to

look for sympathy but let me ask, what have they done for Masjid Tanah?" he asked.

For the second time in a week, Najib made a strong speech about his ties with Dr Ahmad Zahid.

"There are attempts to shake my relationship with my deputy. I want to repeat that my confidence in him is beyond question," he said.

He told his audience how they had shared the same dormitory and even taken baths together "but not in the same bathroom".

Dr Ahmad Zahid has been the newsmaker since the Umno division meetings started last month, but at Masjid Tanah yesterday, he was the supporting actor because his boss was the one officiating the division meeting.

Dr Ahmad Zahid was grinning so broadly that his eyes disappeared. He had an awful week after the "Mahathir a/l Iskandar Kutty" fiasco but the party leaders have rallied around him and he is on a high.

Everyone saw a side of Rauf that they did not know exist. Beneath that fierce-looking XL-sized politi-

cian is a rather cheeky and humorous personality.

He gave a witty speech where he teased the Deputy Prime Minister in a manner that few would have dared, he likened Dr Mahathir to a political scientist and said that "the Malays are not experimental subjects to be used in the politics of Mahathir".

Rauf's division meeting earlier in the morning had passed three resolutions. The first was unequivocal support for Najib's leadership and the second was an uncompromising stand on the position of Bahasa Malaysia.

The third came in the form of a pantun: "*Sama cantik sama badan, pengantin cantik bersanding, Umno majlis tertinggi pohon cadangkan, presiden dan timbalan presiden tak perlu bertanding.*"

It was a pantun pointing to the compatibility of the top two and proposing that there should not be a contest for the president and deputy president post in the next party election.

There is an actor in every success-

ful politician and the Umno division AGMs taking place all over the country have been one big stage, sending out signals to the party grassroots ahead of the general election.

The appearance of former Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia supreme council member Kamarul Azman Habibur Rahman and his supporters also caused a stir that afternoon.

Cikgu Kamarul, as the school teacher is known, was the man who started the ball rolling back in 2015 by gathering 13 Umno branch leaders from the Teluk Kemang division to ask Najib to resign.

He went on to become a founding member of Parti Pribumi and was made organising secretary. The affair was shortlived, as he quit Pribumi in April and there he was, shaking hands with the man he had once asked to resign as Prime Minister.

Najib had quipped as he shook Kamarul's hand: "*Ini orang kuat Mahathir*" (this is Mahathir's strongman).

Politics is indeed the greatest show on earth.

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