

Najib: Dr Mahathir's support won't sway votes

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PEKAN: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's move to throw his support behind Chini by-election independent candidate Tengku Datuk Zainul Hisham Tengku Hussin will not be able to sway votes in the latter's favour.

Former Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Dr Mahathir did not even provide any reasons or explanations on why voters in Chini should give Tengku Zainul Hisham victory.

"He (Dr Mahathir) previously campaigned during the Cameron Highlands by-election and even went down to the ground. Despite his presence, we (Barisan Nasional) secured an increased majority.

"We were hoping he will come to campaign in Chini but he instead uploaded a video message for the voters here. He (Dr Mahathir) has supported the independent candidate (Tengku Zainul Hisham) but did not give any reasons for his decision...such messages will not be able to persuade the voters in Chini," he told reporters after attending the Ziarah Kasih programme at the Kampung Tasik Mentiga Orang Asli settlement here yesterday.

When asked if he welcomed Dr Mahathir to campaign in Chini, the Pekan member of parliament replied there was no problem but felt that the former Bersatu chairman would not come and had instead chosen to produce the video message.

Najib was commenting on Dr Mahathir's move to produce a video message to describe

Tengku Zainul Hisham as the best candidate in the three-way contest and for voters in Chini to help him gain victory in the July 4 polls.

Meanwhile, describing Chini as a BN stronghold, Najib said there were two vital elements when it came to choosing the candidate, namely, the candidate himself and the party the individual represents.

"The candidate has to be someone well-liked and has strong backing from the party. The BN candidate is ideal as at the end of the day, voters need to ask themselves which party will be able to safeguard their future...it has to be BN.

"Do not expect the independent candidate to bring changes."

Najib, who is the Pekan division Umno chairman, said that voters in Chini will back BN as they realise that the two independent candidates will not be able to help or facilitate in bringing changes in the constituency.

"It would be better if we had more independent candidates contesting...we have two in Chini.

"Firstly, they are not familiar faces among the voters and secondly, voters are wise when casting their votes. Independent candidates will find it tough to convince voters.

"Voters must pick a candidate who can assist them and it would be a waste if they decide to pick independent candidates. The independent candidate will collect his allowance (salaries) but will not be able to serve the people well as the person is not in the government. Instead BN is now part of the government," he said.