

**PM: Umno has to lead Malaysia, defend its independence**  
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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has called on the 3.3 million Umno members to "focus on the work each of us can do", saying that no matter what happened, Umno had to lead Malaysia and defend its independence.

In an interview with Umno Online published on Saturday, the prime minister reminded the members of his party that all of them had value.

"Even ordinary members are valuable. There have been occasions when Umno members don't vote during elections, so we must ensure each of the 3.3 million members have a role to play ... Our competitors are the opposition party and not within our own party," said Najib, who is Umno president.

The Pekan MP said that while Umno had done well in the early stages of the country, now with more intense party competition the goal had been adulterated.

"We cannot rely just on the value of our history, but also look towards the future ... I want to emphasize that all Umno leaders must embrace and reflect the values of leadership favored by the people.

He also slammed the opposition for misleading people.

"They are trying to spin negatively and lie to rid people of their confidence in the government," he said, giving the example of the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia financial aid.

"They said, 'this money is borrowed from abroad', which is a false allegation. We implemented BR1M successfully because we managed to increase revenue by RM26bil in one year alone."

The prime minister said that Barisan Nasional was a coalition that focused on the realities of Malaysia, and did not carry out political *sandiwara* like the opposition did.

"Four years have passed and they still have not formed a shadow cabinet," he pointed out.

He also spoke on Umno's 66th anniversary, saying that it would be celebrated on a large scale but would not cause harm to others or to the country.

"We respect the laws of the country. Even though thousands of Umno members will come together ... (we) will be upholding the principles of our country's laws.

**The following is the transcript of the interview:**

**Media Umno:** Is the party, at all levels, ready to face this immense challenge (13th general election) and do you see things that need to be improved have been acted upon?

**Najib:** In general, Umno and our partners in the BN have put in place all the necessary preparations to face the 13th general election, but as usual, we know that there will always be room for improvement especially at the grassroots level and this also includes

the role which can be played by the leaderships at the divisional, polling area and branch levels.

One of the aspects which I would like to emphasize is how important it is for us to work as a team, as a family, which is not only strong but also solid and cohesive in the face of any situation. We should also be able to see that our threats, our competitors are the opposition parties, not among ourselves.

So, in facing this election we must ensure that we can cast aside any bickering or competition among us and focus our attention fully on efforts which we can mobilise to ensure that our machinery is strong and deployable, smooth and in full spirit for Umno and the BN.

**Media Umno:** We notice that the Umno Day is being held at the branch meetings. Has the party at the grassroots level translated and focused all the strength and energy in ensuring that the Umno machinery is moving in tandem to ensure that the party and the BN remain the people's choice especially in the run-up to the 13th general election?

**Najib:** Yes, our machinery have undergone courses, been given guidance and held meetings and nearly all states have launched their election machinery. However, due to the fact that we are a huge party, with 3.3 million members altogether, we should also place in our members' thinking and mindset that they should also focus on efforts which they can do individually, not necessarily us as top the leaders or leaders at the divisional level, but we as ordinary members. We should value our votes because there had been times when Umno members had not voted in elections. So we must ensure that each of the 3.3 million members has a role to play.

**Media Umno:** You have always emphasised the importance of Umno to transform itself to ensure it remains relevant. Do you see this actually happening in Umno so that it can be truly seen as dominant and be the main choice for the people?

**Najib:** The journey has begun and we are seeing results, among them is the amendment to the party's constitution so that Umno is more transparent, democratic and inclusive. We have begun to internalise the 1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now concept, and a lot of programmes have been implemented by Umno based on this philosophy and vision.

However, I'm also a realist, and to carry out a holistic transformation, it should be accompanied by a change in the culture of Umno, and to change the human nature and the value system in the party will of course take time. But I feel that the achievement or the journey has begun and that we are now seeing some changes, but we should push ahead with it because transforming Umno is a challenge which will definitely take time.

**Media Umno:** So the previous 65 years is still not enough, and Umno should continue to transform itself for the people.

**Najib:** Actually Umno is already successful because if we look at the early stage, at the spirit to oppose the Malayan Union, the spirit to free our country, at that time no one questioned about the weaknesses of Umno or internal problem in Umno because our struggle is one and only one; we want Umno to spearhead the country's struggle for independence. And during those times when we were struggling to fill our independence, in the early stage in the 60s and 70s, our struggle was guided by only one objective.

But when our value system became mixed up with the aspirations to go after party posts, and to a certain extent money politics had affected our party as the competitions

became more intense, our objectives had somewhat been muddled up by self interest and so on.

This is what we should avoid. As a party which has been in existence for so long, indeed our value and deeds are invaluable. But the voters of today will not look into our glorious past, in terms of history. They want to know what are our struggles for today and in the future. We cannot therefore rely on history alone, we must look at Umno in the present context and in future.

This is what I want to stress so that each Umno leader internalises and projects the kind of leadership admired by the people, who will then give their full support to Umno and the BN.

**Media Umno:** Datuk Seri, you mentioned just now about a change in the party's culture and value system. What kind of culture would you like to inculcate in Umno within the timeframe for the country to achieve its Vision 2020?

**Najib:** Our cultural values, actually, need not deviate from the original, it's only that we need emphasise on the necessary aspects in the current context as well as in the future. For instance, the value system which places the party's interest above all, the value of loyalty to the party, discipline, teamwork and so on. These are the values which we have built all this while and should be preserved and defended.

In today's context, we retain our old values and adopt new ones, for example the readiness to master new skills and knowledge which are so important today, such as being skilled in ICT for instance, being savvy in the social media is another example, as well as possessing good communication skills. These are the skills we should all acquire and learn so that we as leaders will remain effective in all era.

We have been effective in previous era, the era when we strived for independence, we have also been effective during the post-independence era, and during the time when we bring the nation from an agricultural country to become an industrialised one. So in this era of the 21st century, in the context of a world without borders, in the context of information explosion, we should also demonstrate the effectiveness of Umno's leadership.

**Media Umno:** Do you see the fighting spirit among Umno members waning in today's era? If so, what do you think is the reason?

**Najib:** Yes, in some ways, because we have been successful, and that Umno has done a lot of good deeds, so a lot of people are well off economically and so on. They don't see that the objective of the struggle is huge; above everything else. So if we have the attitude that says 'I want to give priority to my own aspirations as an individual more than that of the party', then this will create problems for our party. I didn't say that we cannot have personal aspirations, that we cannot have self interests, but these must not take precedence over what is important, and what is more important is our party, the future of the party.

**Media Umno:** You have clearly translated new and creative ideas. You have shown sincerity and honesty as a leader in tackling the fear among the people, but there are views that this has not been translated and followed-up upon aggressively at the lower rung of the leadership; seems that there is a vacuum?

**Najib:** This will take time. What we express in terms of policies and what we provide for as a guidance especially the agenda for our country, and the elements of transformation,

all this will take time for them to be understood and appreciated. But I'm excited due to the support given to what we have been doing, such as the 1Malaysia and the People First vision, and we have the [GTP](#), [ETP](#), PTP, which are all supported by Umno.

Umno has never objected to these nor has it questioned them. Umno fully supports these policies but we need to have them translated and we need also to articulate how we can best implement the new agenda for the country, so that the people in general who are outside the party, will be able to accept that Umno is the pillar of our country and Umno is a party which truly able to take our country towards achieving Vision 2020.

**Media Umno:** Are you confident that all that is being done under the 1Malaysia, People First concept, such as 1Malaysia People's Aid, will be well received by the people or will there be any backlash?

**Najib:** I believe that the people responded well to it, and positively, because whenever I go to the field during the meet-the-people programmes, or during my walkabout, I can see that the situation and the mood today is way better.

I can see that the response given to me and the deputy president, and other leaders, is more positive, but we should also realise that the opposition is very active; they will attack, disparage us and they will try to distract us by questioning whatever programme which we implement and create issues out of a non-issue. So, in the face of such situation, we should do what is necessary to convince the people that all these negative elements in term of perception should not be accepted by them.

**Media Umno:** Let's talk about the issue of perception, Datuk Seri. The false perception created by the opposition is in stark contrast to the BN's realist politics. Each time when the BN draws up programmes for the people, it will be spinned and changed into something else to misguide public opinion. What is our role in Umno and in government to deal with such perception?

**Najib:** We should realise that this is what the opposition has been doing and doing so in a fervent manner. They will try to spin issues, they will try negative spinning, in fact they will even lie in their attempt to erode the people's confidence in the government. For instance, when we distribute the BR1M aid, which is hugely popular, they say "the money which we used for the purpose was borrowed from abroad", which is an allegation devoid of any sense of responsibility. This is an utterly false accusation.

We have successfully carried out the BR1M aid because we managed to increase the country's revenue by RM26 billion in just a matter of one year, which is the highest achievement by the government, but this achievement has not been given due credit, and was not appreciated. Instead, they accuse us of doing something as if we are an irresponsible government. Actually, we are far from it.

They are the ones who promise something which is populist in nature. They are also resorting to making up stories, like one particular leader who claimed that I've met with chiefs of the armed forces to create something unconstitutional in the event that Umno and the BN loses. It's a lie of great proportion but they are willing to make this kind of claim so that, if they cannot convince the people, they can at least confuse them. This the tactic used by the opposition.

**Media Umno:** But Datuk Seri, although the people might have been confused by the opposition, due to the lies being told to them, there seems to be no firm and bold action being taken to ensure this will not recur. It seems that this has been going on and on.

**Najib:** We will take action based on the scope of existing law because in this era, we cannot take action by detaining people without any strong grounds; in fact, detaining people without trial cannot be done nowadays. So whatever it is that they have been claiming, we should find sufficient evidence and there should be conviction in court.

This is what makes it difficult for us because sometimes these accusations are hurled online, and the way they word it in a sentence makes it difficult, at times, to take action. Nevertheless, if there are sufficient evidence, the government will take action after a thorough investigation has been carried out.

**Media Umno:** The opposition has been ruling only less than four years in certain states and already there are so many mistakes and problems. But there are still people who have been hoodwinked and are oblivious to the dangerous politics played by the opposition. What are your advice to the people so that they would not be fooled by the false rhetoric at the time when we are facing the 13th general election.

**Najib:** Yes, they promised a lot of things to win the support in the last general election. I've already said it, for instance in Selangor, I've highlighted many of the things which they had promised and what they have not done. We should keep on mentioning these things because if we say it only once or twice, it won't get drummed into the minds of the people but if we emphasise and repeat it many times, people will realise that they have been cheated in the last election and that they should not be cheated again.

**Media Umno:** They use lies, deception, and they are a threat to the government and Umno. During the time that they have been ruling in certain states, has Umno been able to counter these lies by the opposition?

**Najib:** I can see there is indeed a wind of change blowing in the states under their rule. The question is whether this has reach a stage where the people are prepared to change and return to the BN's fold; this is where we should intensify our effort to explain to the people that the opposition parties have no capability to administer the country and the states under them, contrary to what they have been claiming. All the promises they make will be left unfulfilled. This is what the Umno machinery should impress upon the people so that in the end they will be able to judge who is right or wrong.

**Media Umno:** Coming back to the 66th anniversary of Umno. Do you see this as a reflection of Umno's strength to face the coming general election. That, if you announce and beat the war drums, we will be able to obtain a huge majority and recapture the lost states?

**Najib:** This is what I want to emphasise, that we cannot adopt a business-as-usual attitude. We must be aware of this, especially in states where we have lost. We must do something extraordinary in terms of our strategy, our commitment, planning, in terms of programmes which we have implemented and also our role in the online social media. All this should be reflected in the fact that we are in a state which we have lost, a state which was won by the opposition and we should do more than the ordinary.

Let's not do things or contribute in a flat or mediocre manner. If we want to topple the opposition-led governments in these states, we must strive more than usual. This is my message. We must unite more than usual, only then can we have a better chance.

**Media Umno:** Are you seeing us working more than usual and becoming united more than usual?

**Najib:** We have worked hard but I hope that we will work harder. I am someone who is not easily satisfied. It's not that we have not done it, indeed we have, maybe more than usual, but we have never come face-to-face with a scenario where we lost in five states; now, there are four in the opposition's rule. So we must further intensify what we are already doing.

**Media Umno:** On the Umno Day celebration, what do you see in the theme for the celebration, "Umno the People's Defender"?

**Najib:** This is in line with the People First philosophy, meaning we want to highlight and we want to remind that Umno is the party which has been defending the people all this while and that our deeds are big indeed. This is what I want to emphasise and foster. Apart from that, we also want to remind our members that in whatever we do, we must be consistent, be persistent so that the people will become more confident in Umno and the BN.

**Media Umno:** Umno is celebrating its 66th anniversary. Umno is also working with other BN component parties like MCA, Gerakan and so on. How do we ensure that this relationship is forged in a sincere and honest manner, as compared to the relationship among opposition parties.

**Najib:** Our ties are based on the BN's philosophy and practice. We are well-suited with one another in the BN. We are a coalition centred on reality and actuality.

We don't engage in play-acting with the people. One of the biggest theatrics of the opposition is their inability to form a shadow cabinet even though they have been talking about creating a two-party system in the country, but they fail to present a shadow cabinet to the people.

So if they fail to do so when they are the opposition at the national level, how can they become confidence that they can wrest Putrajaya and rule the country successfully? The question is not just about winning the election, the issue is about administering the country; we are doing better for our country. This is a major issue.

In making evaluations, the voters should realise that what they need to take into account is not about who should be in Putrajaya but who actually is able to take our country, to lead our country in the next five years, and able to bring in more benefits to our country.

**Media Umno:** It is clear that from the way Umno is working with BN component parties, it is proven that Umno is not a racist party, and not one which strives to advance the interest of the Malays in an extreme manner.

**Najib:** Umno has never been an extreme party since in the beginning, we are tolerant and inclusive towards other races. That is why we have been successful in the past 12 elections. Although we experienced what is described as the political tsunami of 2008, we learned and we realised that if we have committed a mistake we should own up to it, meaning we should do a soul-searching, and this we did. We should also be brave in instituting changes in the party and the government does this by presenting its transformation plans to the people; and now, we are entering a stage where we should convince the people about all the transformation initiatives which we have implemented and which are implementing.

Meaning, our ability to communicate effectively with the people so that they are able to see that our national transformation agenda is the best for them and for the future of our country.

**Media Umno:** Datuk Seri, the Umno Flag run is now taking place simultaneously in several zones. Do you see a wave of support coming back to Umno and the BN?

**Najib:** Yes, I can see a wind of change in favour of Umno and BN including in states which we have lost. I hope that this momentum can be intensified. Let's not take for granted that victory is in our hands, this is a no-no. In our minds, we should have the attitude that there is always something that we can do. We should adopt the attitude that "I can still do a lot more as long as it is not yet the polling day, and I can still contribute and that I must look at all angles". All Umno leaders must have this kind of attitude.

**Media Umno:** Datuk Seri, the Umno anniversary this time around will be celebrated in a large scale and within a long period. Does this mean that the election is coming or is this a reminder about the struggle of Umno?

**Najib:** I see that the birth of Umno, the party's 66th anniversary as an opportune time for us to hold a gathering because it's been a while since we have a mass gathering. It is timely for us to do so, and everybody knows that the election won't be too long into the future. So, it's just apt for us to showcase to the people what Umno has done all these years. We should show the strength of Umno and we should also show that we can organise a rally in a peaceful manner and that we are respectful of the law of this country, and although there will be thousands of Umno members gathering, it will not cause harm to others, to our country. Umno will uphold the country's rule of law and the sanctity of the constitution.

**Media Umno:** The Umno Day culminates into a large scale rally at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium. So what are your advice to all Umno members who will be at Bukit Jalil?

**Najib:** I would like to remind us, all Umno members that this is a blessed party for the Malays. We have a sense of pride in Umno, that we are a member of a family which is the largest party in the country. We shouldn't feel insulted, we shouldn't feel pressured because everything enjoyed by the country today is in fact is a result of Umno's deeds, and those of Umno leaders, big or small, over the years. We must regard this mass gathering as a proof of our strength and we shall march forward in a strong front, with a strong commitment, and God willing, with this new spirit we shall achieve a huge victory in the coming election.

**Media Umno:** Thank you Datuk Seri and congratulations once again. May we achieve a major victory in the coming election.

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