

Skip early polls, Dr M advises Najib
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PUTRAJAYA, Sept 12 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed has suggested that Datuk Seri Najib Razak not call a general election soon, advising the prime minister to instead use the time to work on his preferred list of Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates.

Dr Mahathir was responding to a question from Utusan Malaysia assistant chief editor Datuk Zaini Hassan during an RTM television interview here today.

Zaini had asked the former prime minister to comment on claims that BN division chiefs have been jostling and fighting among one another to contest in the upcoming polls.

"I think that if it's held a little later, it's OK; there should be time for Najib to make an assessment on who should be chosen as a candidate," Dr Mahathir said during the taping of the television interview today.

He said that BN's current policy of only fielding "winnable candidates" might pose a problem for the national coalition as it could cause more friction between party leaders who wanted to contest.

"It has been common practice for someone who does not get selected as a candidate to go out of their way to prove the other person who is selected is not qualified.

"This problem is hard to overcome. There is still a problem," he said.

He said that as BN chairman, Najib should make it clear to component party leaders that unconditional support towards selected candidates was needed even if they did not personally support the chosen runner.

"Najib should work on explaining to the potential candidates... if they don't give support to the chosen candidates, they will also be in trouble," said Dr Mahathir.

The Najib administration has been on the back foot in recent months, having to deal with the aftermath of the July 9 Bersih rally as well as contending with a growing racial divide among Malaysians and spiralling inflation.

The current administration's mandate does not expire until 2013 but Najib is understood to be considering an early general election to both secure his personal mandate and improve BN's existing hold on power.

BN suffered historic losses during Election 2008, when it ceded its traditional supermajority in Parliament as well as another four states to the fledgling Pakatan Rakyat pact.

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