

**PAS claims Dr M out to oust Najib**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14 — PAS today accused former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad of exploiting his influence in Umno to mastermind a plot to unseat Datuk Seri Najib Razak ahead of the next general election.

PAS vice-president Datuk Mahfuz Omar named the influential Dr Mahathir as the hidden hand behind an uprising within Umno's ranks against Najib and his men, pointing out that the country's longest serving prime minister had done the same to Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi during the tail-end of his career.

"Dr Mahathir has returned to become the mastermind in Umno's chess game... the internal politicking and the chaos in Umno... much like what happened during the movement to topple Pak Lah (Abdullah)," the Pokok Sena MP told a press conference here.

Mahfuz (picture) attributed his suspicion to a statement by Dr Mahathir during an RTM television interview on Monday when the latter urged Najib against calling for early snap polls and use the time instead to work on searching for winnable candidates for Barisan Nasional (BN).

"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 had said.

Mahfuz said Dr Mahathir's was subtly hinting to Najib his view that the prime minister himself was incapable of leading BN to victory in the coming polls, seen as the ruling pact's most crucial to date after a poor showing during Election 2008.

The PAS man alleged that Umno leaders themselves now consider Najib a liability to the party and are conspiring to replace him before the polls.

"That is why Dr Mahathir is asking Najib to delay the polls because they are now admitting to internal pressure within Umno, they do not want the elections to be called in a situation where Najib is still the leader," he said.

PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali made a similar allegation recently of a purportedly huge uprising within Umno to oust Najib amid fears that the prime minister and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor would cost BN its hold on Putrajaya in the coming polls.

But the Islamist party claimed that Najib was fully aware of this movement and has refused to step down as he is determined to lead BN into the polls, expected to be held in coming months.

At the time, Mustafa would not say if the anti-Najib movement was led by the latter's deputy, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, but claimed that the movement was significant, involves leaders from the upper echelons of the ruling party and would rear its head soon.

He said that, among others, Umno leaders fear that the scandals involving Najib and

Rosmah, such as the Scorpene submarines purchase and its link to the murder of Mongolian model Altantuya Shaaribuu, would affect voter sentiment towards BN during the polls.

Opposition leaders have repeatedly linked Najib and Rosmah to the scandal, which is currently being probed in France, and the government's recent decision to deport French lawyer William Bourdon fuelled their suspicion further.

Rosmah has also been criticised for her purportedly extravagant spending habits, with latest news reports claiming that she had purchased a RM24 million diamond ring from world-renowned jeweller Jacob & Co.

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