

Najib: Dr M still watches over me
Malaysian Insider
December 02, 2012
By Zurairi AR

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 2 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak appeared today to admit that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad still wields a strong influence over the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration, pointing out that the country's longest serving prime minister is "watching over him".

While launching the People's Progressive Party (PPP) annual general meeting (AGM) here, Najib congratulated Dr Mahathir for Vision 2020, a blueprint for Malaysia to reach the status of a developed nation which was launched by the latter in 1991.

"He got the easy task, (but) I got the difficult task," the Najib joked.

"He announced ... made the vision, (but) I had to fill up his vision. Because he's still watching over me."

Dr Mahathir was also mentioned by PPP president Datuk Seri M Kayveas in his opening address, who thanked the former prime minister for his contribution to the nation.

Kayveas described Dr Mahathir as a "priceless pearl" and the architect of modern Malaysia, whom he credited for PPP's rise to relevance.

"It is not wrong for me to say PPP was given recognition and solid support during Tun's time until it became a stable party (up) from the dark ages," Kayveas told the hall filled with around 4,000 PPP members here.

Buoyed by praise from Najib and Kayveas, Dr Mahathir emerged from the event today boasting that BN would snap up the two-thirds parliamentary majority it is gunning to win in the next polls.

"I think today we could see PPP for example ... the spirit is very good," Dr Mahathir told reporters on the sidelines of the PPP assembly today.

"You can see it, you can feel it. I'm sure we'll do much better than the last (election), and we may even get the two-thirds majority."

The veteran statesman has remained in the public eye since his exit from the forefront of Umno politics in October 2003, but has been more prominent in the spotlight of late, seemingly in his attempt to shore up support for BN ahead of the polls.

But the outspoken Dr Mahathir has made it known that he was campaigning to keep Umno and BN alive, even though it meant trumpeting policies by Najib that he has oftentimes admitted he disagreed with.

Opposition leaders have been criticising Umno and Najib for fearing Dr Mahathir's influence and therefore, refusing to shut him up, and have warned that the former prime minister's sometimes radical remarks may frighten off Najib's middle ground support.

Critics also have pointed to Dr Mahathir's apparent endorsement for Malay right-wing group Perkasa, oftentimes described as an outlet for Umno conservatives to spew pro-Malay and pro-Islam extremism, which has been curbed in the party, as Najib tries to garner centrist votes.

Dr Mahathir's influence in Umno has been seen as just the right balance that Najib needs to keep Umno's conservative bloc of supporters in BN's fold.

As such, Najib has not once criticised Dr Mahathir, likely learning from his predecessor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's past.

Abdullah, who was Dr Mahathir's chosen replacement as prime minister when he stepped down, had run afoul of the powerful politician by seeking to unravel his policies and refusing to seek his advice on key administrative decisions.

In Election 2008, Abdullah led BN into its worst-ever electoral performance, which saw the ruling Umno at its weakest state after the pact lost its traditional two-thirds parliamentary majority and four states to the opposition.

Najib yesterday praised the country's longest serving prime minister for "voluntarily" campaigning for Umno.

He pointed out that Dr Mahathir, despite his advanced years and exit from the forefront of Umno's politics, had traversed the length and breadth of Malaysia to rally Umno's troops ahead of the coming polls.

"I would like to thank Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Why do I mention Tun's name in this assembly?"

"Because even without me telling him to, Dr Mahathir has voluntarily met with all our Umno leaders," Najib said, calling sudden attention to the veteran politician during his closing speech at Umno's 66th general assembly.

Dr Mahathir, who was sitting slumped in his seat inside Dewan Merdeka, was a picture of surprise at the mention of his name.

When applause spread across the hall and delegates rose to give the former prime minister a standing ovation, Dr Mahathir smiled, tried to wave the crowd down, before getting to his feet to acknowledge the praise.

Hakcipta © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-dr-m-still-watches-over-me/>