

**I don't want Najib to be ousted, says Dr M**  
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**By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he would prefer to avoid a scenario where Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak would be unseated by his party Umno should he fail to garner a stronger mandate in Election 2013.

The former prime minister had also said he had no candidate in mind when asked if he felt that there was a suitable replacement for the current Umno president if the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition is unsuccessful in forming two-thirds in Parliament.

"I don't have a candidate in mind. What I said was only theoretical. Of course I don't want that to happen," he told reporters after launching a corporate event here.

Three days ago Dr Mahathir predicted Umno would move to unseat Najib as its leader if the party president fails to improve upon the setback from Election 2008 in the coming polls.

"Of course, if he does not perform, there will be some necessity to switch horses," the 87-year-old was quoted as saying.

"There could be a lot of disappointment and maybe a move to challenge him. That is normal."

Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister also told French news agency AFP that he worried about a possible regime change, suggesting there would be chaos and religious strife if his BN lost power.

The news agency noted that such comments carry weight after Dr Mahathir, who retired in 2003, helped dump his own chosen successor, Tun Abdullah Badawi, with scathing criticism a year after the polls debacle in 2008.

Dr Mahathir's remarks drew flak from Umno leaders on Monday, who contended that winning Election 2013 should take precedence over party intrigues.

Seasoned Umno lawmakers contacted by The Malaysian Insider appeared upset that the country's fourth and longest-serving prime minister had chosen to publicly remind Najib about what he stood to lose with the 13th general election just weeks away, but did not deny that party warlords may push for the sixth PM to be ousted should the BN suffer further setbacks.

Some Umno members believed Dr Mahathir's statements could undo Najib's vigorous push to maintain the party's Malay powerbase and court the critical young — seen to be the new kingmakers, according to the results of several surveys conducted in the past few months in the run-up to Election 2013.

Political analysts have forecast that BN will retain federal power at the polls that must be called by end-April when the current BN mandate expires, but have said that any win will be slim and unlikely to give it the customary two-thirds majority it enjoyed before Election 2008.

Other pundits, however, believe an opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) win at the polls may be possible, ushering a new regime into power for the first time since Independence in 1957.

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