

**Umno Not Racist Party, Says Najib
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KUALA TERENGGANU, May 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today Umno was not an "assabiyah" (racist) party as certain political parties claimed.

The prime minister said the government had never rejected Islam in the national administration and, in fact, the Umno national spirit was founded on Islam.

"Assabiyah is when we collude to do wrong, meaning we gang up with one group to suppress or oppress other groups," he said when addressing about 6,000 people at a gathering in Mengabang Telipot, here.

Also present were Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor; Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Said, who is the BN candidate for the Kijal state seat; and several other BN candidates.

Najib, who is Umno president and BN chairman, questioned the statement by PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that the prayers of Umno members and supporters were not rewarded because the party rejected Islam and struggled in the national spirit.

"I want to ask Nik Aziz, the authority to determine sin or divine reward rests with a spiritual leader or God?

"I believe it is not within the jurisdiction of man, not the authority of a spiritual leader. In fact, even the Prophet did not do so ... this is the power of God. They (the certain political parties) want to usurp even that ... all because of politics," he said.

Nik Aziz recently issued a "fatwa" (edict) saying that Umno's struggle was based on "assabiyah" (racism).

The Kelantan menteri besar claimed that by subscribing to this ideology, Umno had rejected Islam.

Elaborating, Najib said that Umno's national struggle had liberated Malaysia from British colonialism.

He said Umno's struggle today was based on "maqasid syariah" (higher objectives of syariah), and international scholars had acknowledged Malaysia as being among the countries which were most compliant with this concept.

"When it is said that we abide by the maqasid syariah, it means we safeguard the religion, defend the word of God.

"So, who is flip-flopping now ... all this is because of politics, to garner votes," said Najib.

He stressed that the principles, faith and the word of God should not be manipulated by anyone.

Najib's voice was hoarse after having addressed the people all over the country but he was eager to carry on with the election campaign.

"It does not matter that my voice has gone hoarse, so long as the BN wins," he said to applause from the people.

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