

**Is Najib still a 'winnable' candidate, asks Umno MP**  
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**By Md Izwan**

As Umno celebrates its 69th anniversary today, a party grassroots leader has said it is time Datuk Seri Najib Razak asks himself if he is a winnable candidate or not, following mounting criticism against his administration and now the latest 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) controversy involving pilgrims' fund Lembaga Tabung Haji.

"The party president always says we want 'winnable' candidates. Well, today, whether he is still 'winnable' to the people as Umno president and prime minister is a question he must ask himself," Umno lawmaker and Kulim division chief Datuk Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir said in an interview.

"His credibility has been questioned due to 1MDB, which the people consider as a failing by the president and prime minister," the Kulim-Bandar Baru MP told The Malaysian Insider.

1MDB has debts totalling RM42 billion and its opaque operations and allegations of scandal has brought criticism on Najib, who is chairman of its advisory board as well as Finance Minister.

Aziz said as long as the 1MDB issue was not resolved, Najib would find his reputation difficult to repair.

Umno will mark 69 years as the leading Malay political party and pioneer of Malaya's independence but the celebrations come amidst a severe test of party unity as Najib stands under the weight of criticism by no less than veteran statesman, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Last night on a working visit in Sabah, Najib was defiant, telling a crowd of 40,000 people that he would not bow to pressure to resign.

For the first time, he also openly slammed Dr Mahathir, reminding the longest-serving prime minister that he stayed in power for 22 years only because of the support he received.

"If we did not support him in his time of need, Dr Mahathir would not have stayed on for 22 years as the PM," Najib had said.

"So, do not forget, when he was the PM, we gave him our full support... Now that he is no longer the PM, support us in return.

"Don't make noise even if not so supportive," he said.

But Aziz said Najib has not been able to address allegations against 1MDB, and

questioned why no action was taken against 1MDB office holders when issues about its massive debts were raised months ago.

"1MDB has continued for two years, we have been talking for months now but not a single action has been taken, not one person in 1MDB has been suspended.

"In other cases, investigation itself would have resulted in someone's suspension.

"What's so wrong to suspend while the investigation is held," Aziz said.

"As long as he is unable to solve the 1MDB problems, not only to ensure it is better managed but also address the misappropriation and allegations linked to it, then his image is not one that is clean," he said.

In early March, Najib ordered the Auditor-General to conduct an independent check on 1MDB's accounts, but no news has been forthcoming about the audit. Parliament's Public Accounts Committee, however, has said it will begin its own hearings on 1MDB soon.

That the Tabung Haji-1MDB deal, in which the pilgrims' fund bought a 0.63ha plot of land for RM188.5 million from the debt-ridden government-owned investment firm, has surfaced at such a time could make for awkward anniversary celebrations tonight, when Umno meets at its headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Senior party leaders have criticised the deal and asked for explanations, including deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and vice-presidents Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal.

Political analyst Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani said it is obvious that Umno is in a crisis, even if the warring factions are not clearly defined.

"As it celebrates its 69th anniversary, it is quite clear that Umno is in a crisis involving the prime minister and some of the leaders of the party.

"But it is not quite clear yet who is against whom, although if we look at some statements coming out of Sabah, we can see there is a crisis, for example, the statement by (Kalabakan MP) Datuk Seri Abdul Ghapur Salleh who spoke about enemies among us ("gunting dalam lipatan"), which shows that there is movement within Umno to topple the party president," Azizuddin told The Malaysian Insider, referring to Ghapur's remark which he had heard on the news on TV3 yesterday.

Azizuddin, who is also a lecturer at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), said Umno's internal strife stemmed from the influence of former leaders like Dr Mahathir and Tun Daim Zainuddin.

"When such polemical attacks occur, the problem of enemies coming among us also arises, except that we don't know how strong such a movement is and whether it is capable of removing Najib, because he still appears to be in a strong position," said

Azizuddin.

He said Umno was still strong despite Najib being under attack although the seeds of disunity had already been sown. But failure to close ranks decisively could also affect the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition as a whole.

"Umno is still stable in the sense that it has the support of the Malays at between 60 to 65%, only that it is no longer a strong example of a party to lead the BN at a time when component members MIC, MCA and Gerakan are also weak," Azizuddin said.

A disunited Umno would find it impossible to face the next general elections with confidence, another analyst, Ibrahim Suffian of polling firm Merdeka Center said. – May 11, 2015.

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