

You are not alone, Sarawak Barisan tells Najib
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By Desmond Davidson

Under attack in the peninsular over his handling of the debt-ridden state investment firm, 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak last night found he still had friends and support for his leadership from one of Barisan Nasional's "fixed deposit states" in Borneo.

At a gathering in Kuching marking the Gawai Dayak or harvest festival, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem told the prime minister never to doubt Sarawak's loyalty to him as he faced mounting pressure from the opposition and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to quit office and a reported revolt in his Cabinet over 1MDB.

"Look to your right. Look to your left. Look in front and look behind you. You are not alone.

"We in Sarawak are behind you come hell or high water unlike some people in the peninsular, including from Umno," Adenan told Najib as the majority Dayak crowd clapped rapturously.

He said Sarawak would be "behind him all the time, when he is in trouble and when he is down".

Najib, who is also finance minister and chairman of 1MDB's advisory board, has been receiving criticism over the firm's opaque dealings and RM42 billion debts.

A few ministers have made strong statements against the investment firm, pressing Najib to give clear answers and to resolve its troubles quickly.

Last Friday, Najib reportedly told his minister at the weekly Cabinet meeting to resign if they did not agree with steps to rehabilitate the firm.

But Adenan said Najib should stay in office so that the 1MDB issue would be resolved "all the way".

"We in Sarawak know when to be grateful. We do this (giving him unconditional support) not because we are afraid of him because he is the prime minister.

Adenan said in Najib's six years since his appointment as prime minister in 2009, he had done more for Sarawak than all his five predecessors, "including a certain gentleman of 22 years" – alluding to Dr Mahathir – put together.

"Najib has been to Sarawak many times. Which prime minister could boast that?

"Not even that gentlemen of 22 years."

Apart from the frequent visits, Najib had channelled billions of ringgit to the state which Adenan said had long been treated by past prime ministers as a "stepchild".

Some of the money had gone to realising a decades-old dream – upgrading the Pan Borneo highway from a two-lane to a four-lane highway, the chief minister said.

The prime minister last night disclosed he had earlier in the day instructed the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa to speed up the agreement on the upgrading of the highway so work could start "as soon as possible".

The prime minister said he was moved by the "very, very strong show of support" by Adenan.

"He gives committed support through thick and thin. Not only when things are fine (but also) when things are a bit patchy," Najib said later.

Najib is in Sarawak today for a working visit. He has so far been to Sabah, Johor, Perlis, Perak and his home ground of Pekan in Pahang, for working visits and to attend solidarity gatherings for his leadership. – June 4, 2015.

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