

**Political Funds: I Am Only Continuing Practice As Party President – Najib
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JOHOR BA HARU, Aug 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said his receipt of political funds was a practice in the party and as the president of UMNO, he was only continuing that practice.

The prime minister said seeking funds to meet the party and community's needs was part of the party president's duty and this was never disputed before.

"When I was deputy president, I never questioned about the party's funds; that was the work of the party president.

"(This) also happened during Tun's (Dr Mahathir Mohamad) time ...I was just continuing the practice," in said in his speech at the opening of the Pasir Gudang UMNO division delegates' meeting, here, today.

Saying that it was not an easy job as party president, Najib added that he had to work hard at finding funds for the party, but ensuring that it did not contravene the law.

"(When one becomes party president, many will ask (for funds)...the party machinery cannot move when the money does not come, even the menteri besar can ask from me...but from whom can I ask? That is why I have to work at it.

"That was also why the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission had said that what I received was not from 1MDB (1Malaysia Development Bhd) and not a bribe, but a contribution for the party and for corporate social responsibility (CSR)...not for my self interest," he said.

Najib again chided the opposition which rejected the proposal for the disclosure of political fund sources which he had made four years ago.

On his recent cabinet reshuffle, the prime minister stressed that it was not aimed at hurting the feelings of Johor people.

"It was a very difficult decision but for certain reasons, it had to be made in the interest of politics....not to hurt the Johorians," he said.

In the cabinet reshuffle, Najib had dropped his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also the member of Parliament for Pagoh.

Admitting that he understood the sentiments in Johor, which all this while has been UMNO and Barisan Nasional (BN) stronghold, Najib said he appreciated the trust that Johor UMNO had given him to continue steering the party.

"I believe and am confident that based on past experience (including) when Semangat 46 came about, Johor is still positive and constructive to be with UMNO.

"I am confident that in the current situation, Johor UMNO will continue to play a constructive role....together we not only pray (for the best) but work at it," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Najib acknowledged how significant Johor was for UMNO not only as the state where this Malay political party was born, but that UMNO's strength at the national level also depended a lot on the state.

"Therefore, it is very important for us to continue with the party's struggle for UMNO to remain strong and respected, so our fortress, Johor UMNO, must be protected," said Najib, who promised to continue steering the party although faced with a difficult situation.

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