

Ringgit slump was worse in 1997, says Najib
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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today said the current slump of the ringgit is not as bad as it was in 1997, under the leadership of then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said at the time, the Malaysian currency was in a free fall and there were many problems plaguing the country, including undercapitalised banks.

"At the time, our debts to various bodies were in US dollars.

"We had to peg the ringgit in order to get over the crisis," he said at the launch of the Gerik Umno division meeting this afternoon.

He added that the ringgit's current drop in value was due to uncontrolled factors that were dependent on the global market condition.

"All countries involved in commodity exports are facing a drop in their currency value.

"New Zealand is worse than us and New Zealand is not facing 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). This is because the factors are out of our control," he said.

He said in his tenure as Prime Minister, there are less problems, in comparison with Mahathir's 22-year helming of the government, when there were larger problems.

"Those problems were successfully overcome, why? Because people like me gave total support at the time," he said.

He brought up the incident of Anwar's sacking from Umno as the party deputy president and deputy prime minister in 1998, which caused him setbacks in the 1999 general election; his Pekan parliamentary seat was retained by only a 241-vote majority.

"At the time photos of Anwar's black eye was pasted everywhere during the election.

"These are unexpected political strategies.

"But in the general election after that, we worked hard and I won with a more than 22,000 majority, one of the highest in the party," he said.

He also spoke about the party's challenges in 1987, when members were split into factions of Team A and Team B, eventually leading to the party's deregistration and formation of Umno Baru.

Najib said the challenges were overcome because the party rearranged its leadership

and strengthened support in the divisions.

He added that support from the grassroots was important, not for himself personally, but for his position as Umno president and Prime Minister.

"These two institutions must be strong and respected and it will only be strong with undivided support from members." he said. – August 16, 2015.

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