

Allowing Members To Elect UMNO President Proves UMNO Doesn't Belong To Me – Najib

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ALOR GAJAH, Aug 13 (Bernama) --"The move to allow over 165,000 grassroots members to vote for the election of UMNO president in 2013 is a solid evidence that UMNO does not belong to me, unlike in the era of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad," says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Najib, who is also UMNO president, said in Tun Dr Mahathir's era, the former prime minister and party president had used the 'quota and bonus votes' mechanism during party polls to ensure that he could retain power.

"After I became UMNO president, I abolished the mechanism and left my fate to be decided by over 165,000 UMNO members nationwide.

"It turned out that I won uncontested and it showed that UMNO openly supported my leadership. It is also a solid evidence that UMNO does not belong to me, but to all its members," he said when opening the Masjid Tanah UMNO Division Delegates Conference here today.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahidi, Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron and UMNO Executive Secretary Datuk Seri Ab Rauf Yusoh, who is also Masjid Tanah UMNO chief. UMNO became more open, democratic and inclusive when the amendment to the party's constitution was passed in 2009, which among others, increased the number of members allowed to vote for the election of top leadership and divisional leaders, and also abolished the quota system in party polls.

Najib said Tun Dr Mahathir became the Prime Minister and UMNO president not because he was a popular leader, but because he had 'secured' the party's top leadership by using the "quota and bonus votes".

"During the 1987 election, he (Tun Dr Mahathir) contested against Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and he won by only 43-vote majority. Although I was quite close to Tengku Razaleigh, I upheld the principle of wala' (loyalty).

"Back then, I was UMNO Youth chief and Tun M was my boss, so I'm compelled to support him and I did pledged my support to him. But what did he do? He secured the top leadership using the quota and bonus votes," Najib said.

He said as UMNO president, he had made various decision upon discussions with Ahmad Zahid and other UMNO leaders and as a result, UMNO has become a party which is more open today.

"Who is more dictator in the party? UMNO doesn't belong to me. In fact, it is more open today than in the past. I became the party leader because of the support from UMNO members," he said.

Meanwhile, Najib said he need not to look over his shoulder when performing his duties as the prime minister as he had full confidence in Ahmad Zahid.

He said the close relationship between him and Ahmad Zahid was not built yesterday, but had developed over the years since 1986 and many did not know what they had been through together.

"No one knows how many times we had attended the same courses and stayed in the same dormitory. No one knows Ahmad Zahid's trials and tribulations in Bagan Datuk and how I, as the UMNO Youth chief, braved myself to campaign for him.

"Now that there is an attempt to shake my confidence in Ahmad Zahid, I would like to reassure you that my confidence in him cannot be shaken nor questioned by anyone," Najib added.

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