

THE STAR

DATE: 12/10/2008

Dr M will loom large now, says Zaid

The Star - 12/10/2008

By **SHAILA KOSHY**
koshy@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will not be able to institute any crucial reforms as Prime Minister as long as Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is around, claims former de facto Law Minister Datuk Zaid Ibrahim.

"The 2004 election manifesto is history," said Zaid, who was appointed minister specifically to work on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's promise to reform institutions of government, improve accountability and transparency, and strengthen the Rule of Law and independence of the judiciary.

He resigned from the Cabinet recently, after a journalist, MP and on-line news portal editor were arrested under the Internal Security Act.

"Najib is smart and articulate but to change the course of Umno, he has to be brave and why would he take such a risk?

"Second, even if he wanted to, he would not be able to do it with Dr Mahathir around," he said.

Asked whether that was because he thought Dr

Mahathir was powerful or had a strong influence on Najib, Zaid said: "He (Dr Mahathir) has a large group of friends, otherwise the Prime Minister (Abdullah) would not have been 'thrown out' just like he wanted.

"Mahathirism was all control, control, control. He has a strong influence on the top Umno leaders who had to choose between doing his bidding or facing his wrath.

"So many in Umno are bound to the old, making it difficult to abandon old values and principles.

"Especially when, if you allow for more democracy, you lose some control.

"I don't see it (major reform) happening but I hope that Najib will prove me wrong, for himself and for the country's sake," he said.

On his recent comment that Najib has never talked of reform, and when asked why a deputy prime minister would need to do so when the agenda was set by the Prime Minister, Zaid replied: "Yes, but after the Prime Minister talks, shouldn't the deputy strengthen it with his own comments?"