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'BN old guard should know when to step down'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Long-serving Barisan Nasional elected representatives should know when to retire, as failing to do so when the time comes can lead to people rejecting the coalition.

BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said those who wanted to see a change of leaders would vote the BN out when their voices demanding for change fell on deaf ears.

"It has happened to us in Kelantan and Terengganu. We went ahead and fielded old faces when the people wanted new leaders and we lost the two States.

"It also happened in the Anak Bukit by-election. We had to pay the price," he said, adding that all BN elected representatives must leave when their time was up.

Without naming the leaders, Mohamed said some BN elected representatives had overstayed and must take the bold step to leave.

"Don't be selfish. They should realise that no one is indispensable," he said, adding that people wanted a change of leaders because of various factors, including non-performing wakil rakyat.

Mohamed was responding to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice to veteran BN politicians on Tuesday that they should make way for new faces.

The Prime Minister, who is stepping down at the end of the month, also told these long-serving leaders to campaign for new candidates in the next general election.

Mohamed cited the case of former MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his deputy Datuk Lim Ah Lek, who resigned for the sake of the party.

He said the two leaders had displayed political maturity and the MCA today had regained the confidence of the Chinese community.

"BN leaders should heed Dr Mahathir's advice. I think he wants to convince BN component parties that we need to make changes to retain power.

"If Dr Mahathir can take the bold step to resign, why not others?" he asked.

Mohamed also said when Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi takes over, he would have to accommodate the demands of people who wanted new leaders.

"If the BN continues to retain the old guard and if the representatives are not willing to step down, then the people might reject the BN.

"People in some countries had rejected political parties which fought for their independence just because the parties refused to change their leaders."