

'Challenge to Najib won't come from Muhyiddin'

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INTERVIEW Failure to secure a bigger winning majority for the BN in the 13th general election than its 2008 result will put Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak at risk in the next Umno elections - but the challenge will not from his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin.

If a challenge is mounted against Najib, it would be from the second echelon leaders, veteran journalist and one time Umno strongman Abdullah Ahmad said in an interview with Malaysiakini last week.

NONE"Who will challenge Najib? Not Muhyiddin. The challengers will be from the ranks of (Umno Youth chief) Khairy Jamaluddin and (Jelun MP) Mukhriz Mahathir, although not necessarily from them."

All the same, he said, Mukhriz would likely want to be a full minister first, rather than rock the boat, even though Khairy seemed to have "lost steam".

"He is no longer the magnate he once was. Meanwhile, the chairmanship of PUNB should keep him busy."

According to Abdullah, who was once adviser to Najib's father and second PM Abdul Razak Hussein, a challenge is unlikely to come from top leaders like Najib's first cousin and Umno vice-president Hishammuddin Hussein.

"(Hishammuddin) would have to also share the blame if BN wins by a small majority. The president, deputy and vice presidents will be held accountable," he said.

'Concentrate on winning the election'

The former Umno supreme council member, who is also known as 'Dollah Kok Lanas' added that as it now stands, BN can win with a majority of as low as 20 or as high as 40 seats.

If Najib wins with only a 20-seat majority, he will be at risk of a challenge in the coming Umno elections.

"I were him, I would concentrate on winning the general election first and let the civil servants run the government in this crucial time, of course, with his supervision.

"He is doing fine now... If he knows how to manage things, he can do a lot more after he wins.

NONE"Umno people are easy to appease. Their antidote is this (rubs two fingers and a thumb together), and positions, but that too must be done in the right way," he said.

Abdullah, who is seen as approving Najib's style of leadership, added that he believes the prime minister can pull off a more significant victory compared with the 2008 election because he is "able and more pragmatic than his predecessor".

Najib took over from Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who resigned as Umno president and the country's fifth prime minister after the BN's poor performance in the March 8, 2008 general election, losing two-thirds majority in Parliament and control of five states.

BN wrested control of Perak in 2009 after defections by Pakatan Rakyat assemblypersons.

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