

## **Dr M 'will influence' GE13, but how?**

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Even at the age of 87 and without any government position, former PM Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a busy man of late, shuttling from one speaking event to another where he often puts a good word in for the BN.

According to a special report by Sinar Harian today, Mahathir's busy schedule is not without purpose, as pretty much everyone the Malay daily interviewed agreed that the man who had ruled Malaysia for 22 years will influence the next general election.

BN supporters club deputy chairperson Abdul Rahman Dahlan fawned over Mahathir for his focus on the Malays and his ability to reach out to youths by blogging.

"We should consider him a statesman who can criticise both the policies of the government and the opposition.

"I'm sure a lot of people appreciate this," he was reported saying.

University Utara Malaysia (UUM) law faculty dean Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani meanwhile told Sinar that Mahathir's influence is less apparent among the youth because they will not accept being told to be "grateful".

Revolt against Pak Lah

As for Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz, head of UUM's Institute of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Thoughts, the former premier was an "icon" among bureaucrats.

He said that the bureaucrats are usually "split" but if Mahathir endorses incumbent Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (left), they will back the latter en masse.

Analyst Ibrahim Suffian, who heads independent pollster Merdeka Centre, said Mahathir's influence during the 2008 general election was proof enough that he was still a force to be reckoned with.

Ibrahim explained that Mahathir's main audience was Umno members and party supporters.

"If we look at 2008, his comments caused a negative impact (on BN) during the general election," he said.

At the time, Mahathir was at war with his hand-picked successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Pakatan: Mukhriz on his mind

On the Pakatan Rakyat front, there appeared to be a general consensus that Mahathir's recent resurgence in the spotlight had to do with his son Mukhriz.

Mukhriz (right) is currently the MP of Jerlun, Kedah and was made international trade and industry deputy minister, a position he got by leap frogging Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin.

Former PKR deputy president Syed Husin Ali told Sinar he had no doubt that Mahathir was highly influential, but his influence was limited only to BN and he would exert his influence in his son's favour.

"Mahathir is upset with the political situation and blames Najib for causing Umno to be in its current slump. Should Umno lose, it means his son's chances of becoming prime minister will be slim.

"Thus, Mahathir will feel that his own position is in peril," he was reported saying.

Meanwhile PAS vice-president Mahfuz Omar, also from Kedah, said Mahathir had been meticulously planning for Mukhriz's rise in politics and among others is targeting his son for the post of Kedah menteri besar after the next GE.

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