

Shahrir: Is Dr M still relevant?

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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's support or lack of it will not have a significant effect on election results, said BN Backbencher's Club (BNBBC) chairperson Shahrir Abdul Samad.

"He was critical of (then prime minister) Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2008, and then of course BN support reduced. Then in 2013, he was on the side of BN, (support) still was reduced.

"So, do you think he is still relevant?" he told a press conference today.

The next general election is still quite far away, he said, and BN still has time to regroup and recover before then.

Shahrir then recounted the Umno party crisis in 1987 when infighting caused the party to split into two with New Umno under the leadership of Mahathir, and Semangat 46 under Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (photo).

He said Umno did fine in the elections after that incident, and so it will again this time, despite the issues plaguing the party now.

Asked to clarify his statements regarding Mahathir's relevance, Shahrir said "the facts are clear" from the 2008 and 2013 general elections.

However, he further explained that Mahathir's support does affect BN's performance, but perhaps not so much on elections itself.

"We have to put everything in perspective," he said.

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