

Letter to PM - like father like son
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Is history repeating itself?

mahathir mohamad 180108In 1969, former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad played a pivotal role in the resignation of the nation's founding father Tunku Abdul Rahman when a scathing letter he wrote to the latter was leaked.

Mahathir penned the letter, which criticised the first prime minister's leadership, in the wake of heavy losses sustained by the ruling alliance in the general elections. Mahathir was then defeated by PAS candidate Yusof Rawa in the Kota Setar parliamentary seat in Kedah.

Now, in the wake of another crushing defeat, Mahathir's son Mukhriz, who won the Jerlun parliamentary seat in Kedah, has also written a letter to the prime minister.

mukhriz mahathir gaza fund 010208 talkingJust like his father, Mukhriz - who is an Umno Youth exco member - called on Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to accept responsibility and step down.

The 'confidential' letter later appeared on several blogs. Mukhriz's personal assistant, when contacted, confirmed that the letter was written by his boss.

Refraining from making any further comments, the aide said the media will be notified of Mukhriz's next move and that the 'exposure' had caught them by surprise.

A day after the March 8 polls, Mahathir had launched a venomous attack on his handpicked successor.

Apart from reiterating that he made a wrong choice in picking Abdullah, the 82-year-old statesman also accused Abdullah of destroying Umno and BN.

'Humiliating defeat'

Before Mukhriz's letter surfaced, his position regarding his father's stinging criticism was vague. He merely asked Abdullah to "do the right thing."

However, he made his feelings clear in the letter dated March 12 and blamed Abdullah for BN losing its two-third majority in Parliament.

abdullah ahmad badawi polling day vote 080308 05"Apart from Kedah, four other states as well as the Federal Territories also received similar humiliation in defeat. In fact, your own state of Penang was wrested by the DAP from the BN. Kelantan is again under PAS rule," he stated in the letter which was written in Malay.

In other states, Mukhriz continued, BN also suffered similar humiliation and it is believed that the level of support for BN from the people has reduced tremendously.

"This has never happened in the history of BN rule. Let's not deny the truth just for the sake

of keeping your seat as prime minister. For the love of this country and the people, I beg that you take responsibility for the defeat.

"We can save Umno, BN and the nation only if you relinquish your position as prime minister and president of Umno," he said.

Much is at stake

Abdullah, however, has remained defiant, insisting that he will continue to lead. Other party leaders have also expressed support for him.

But sources claimed that the premier is on shaky ground and Mukhriz's letter suggests that Umno is facing one of its worst ever internal feuds.

The old guards are baying for blood, and the young are staring at a bleak future. Much is at stake and the daggers have been drawn.

umno 2007 khairy jamaluddin 061107 03One of the chief targets, according to sources, is Abdullah's ambitious son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin, the Umno Youth deputy chief who won the Rembau parliamentary seat.

Even Mahathir had pointed out that Abdullah relies too much on the 32-year-old Oxford graduate and his band of advisers popularly referred to as the 'fourth floor'.

It is learnt that the old guards, many of whom are Mahathir loyalists, had also rallied their supporters to vote for the opposition to prevent the Khairy 'take over'.

Former information minister and Umno supreme council member Zainuddin Maidin also took a veiled swipe at Khairy when he said the election outcome had derailed the plan by the 'young turks' to assume control.

Zainuddin was one of the many big names who drowned in what analysts have called a political tsunami.

Banners appear

Another sign of an implosion in Umno, is the mysterious appearance of banners condemning Abdullah's leadership and demanding for his head to roll.

umno anti pak lah banners in kl 140308 cucuPut at up several locations in Kuala Lumpur, the banners bearing the Umno emblem and bold red print read, among others: 'Ekonomi rosak, maruah di pajak gadai, Pak Lah turun' (Economy is ruined, dignity pawned, Pak Lah step down) and 'Jangan main-main dengan bangsa Melayu, Pak Lah undur' (Don't play with the Malay race, Pak Lah step down).

A news report today stated that a police report has been lodged by the Wangsa Maju Umno division denying speculation that it had put up the banners.

Whatever said and done, sources said the call for Abdullah to step down is gaining momentum and if he ignores this, it could spell peril for him and the party.

Contacted this afternoon, Mohd Norza Zakaria - a close associate of Khairy - responded with a terse "no comment".

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