

Umno leaders wary of EGM proposal
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 17, 2008
Beh Lih Yi & Muda Mohd Noor

Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's call for an extraordinary general meeting in the wake of the party's unprecedented electoral setback has been shot down by some party leaders. MCPX

The ex-finance minister's suggestion was made in a two-page letter dated March 12 to all Umno division leaders.

In it, he appealed to them to demand an EGM to discuss the March 8 election, which saw the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition denied its two-thirds majority and losing four key states. It also failed to take back Kelantan, held by PAS since 1990.

ku li tengku razaleigh and umno agm 241106Razaleigh, who is also the MP for Gua Musang in Kelantan, also suggested that the special meeting be held on May 11, the anniversary of the founding of Umno in 1946.

Asked to comment, however, Tangga Batu MP Idris Haron said there is no need to hold a separate meeting at this juncture.

This is because the issue could be discussed at the Umno's annual meeting to kick off from the branch level in one or two months' time, followed by divisional and the national level, he noted.

"Let the party process takes its course," said Idris, who retained his seat in the election.

He agreed though that Umno - the backbone of BN - should welcome any suggestion meant to improve and rebuild it in the aftermath of the humiliating election outcome.

'Get priorities right'

Kok Lan state assemblyperson Alwi Che Ahmad said holding an EGM will not be the correct approach.

"(The issues are) something that can't be discussed in public, this is not the solution. It's not something to discuss with members, it should be discussed behind closed doors," argued Alwi, former Ketereh MP.

He is one of only six BN state representatives who won in Kelantan. Up to the election, BN had held 22 of the 45 state seats, which had heightened expectations of snatching back the state.

Alwi said the priority for Umno and BN now is to unveil a credible cabinet line-up - scheduled be announced tomorrow by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

alwi che mat"Those who are not wanted and those who are disliked (by the people) must go. But for now, everyone must take the blame and share the burden together," he said, refusing to name names.

To hold the EGM now would be working against these priorities, he said, citing an analogy.

"If your father is ill, you would take him to hospital and get the advice of the doctors, not call all your siblings for a family meeting first," he said.

mahathir leaflet 050308 jangan undi pemimpin umno yang korupSelangor Umno Youth chief and Kuang state assemblyperson Abdul Syukor Idrus also disagreed with the proposal, as it would merely allow leaders to point fingers at one another and especially at Abdullah, who is also Umno president.

"We can't blame Pak Lah solely for the surprise defeats. We need to re-evaluate ourselves and to tackle our weaknesses from the branch and division levels because it is our responsibility," he said.

Syukor stressed that the meeting would only create fresh problems, in that hopefuls may use the EGM as a means to strengthen their position and vie for posts at the upcoming party polls.

Seremban division chief Ishak Ismail said the suggested date, May 11, is not suitable.

He said the Umno leadership's main problem is that it has ignored the voice of the people and has gone against the people's wishes.

Ku Li: I nearly shed tears

Lumut division chief Zambry Abdul Kadir, however, agreed to an EGM if this is conducted in good faith to identify problems and to find solutions to restore the people's faith in Umno.

Zambry, who is also the Pangkor state assemblyperson, called for a frank discussion.

"(But) I would not agree to the EGM if it is meant to insult someone," he said.

A Kuala Lumpur-based Umno leader who requested anonymity pointed out that the EGM may turn into a platform for detractors to vent their frustration, and said this would risk dividing the party further.

abdullah ballot box umno barisan 190108He was also of the view that calls for Abdullah (photo) to resign are "a knee-jerk reaction", and that the situation requires further consideration by party members.

"To ask the prime minister to resign is (going to create) a problem, not a solution. To me, (Abdullah's deputy) Najib (Abdul Razak) is not acceptable either," he said.

In the letter, Razaleigh stressed the need for the EGM to examine the disastrous electoral performance, failing which Umno may not be able to represent the voices of the Malays again.

The 70-year-old, who had made a failed challenge against Abdullah for Umno president in 2004, painted a dire picture of the party's status.

"In the first general election in 1955, Umno controlled two-thirds of the seats in Parliament.

Today, we are a minority voice in Parliament. At the federal level, Umno is no longer a strong political power. I nearly shed tears thinking about this scenario," he stated.

In 2004, Umno held 107 of 219 parliamentary seats in 204, but only 78 of 222 seats currently. Other BN component parties hold the remaining 62 seats now.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79971>