

Tun Dr Mahathir : blame the 'Sultan' and the Kid
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Umno was thrashed in the general election because of poor selection of candidates by 'Sultan' Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and 'Kid' Khairy Jamaluddin - so claimed former party boss Dr Mahathir Mohamad. MCPX

mahathir khir toyo kmu forum 010408 05In full cry this morning in Petaling Jaya, Mahathir amused some 1,000 party supporters with his caustic wit as he expanded on a pet theory - how Umno has been turned into a "family party" where power is concentrated in the hands of Abdullah and his son-in-law.

The event was organised by pro-Mahathir Umno supporters' group MyKMU.Net, as a post-election forum.

The three-hour session first featured three speakers - former Umno Selangor chief Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, Umno Youth executive committee member Mukhriz Mahathir and Johor Umno information chief Dr Mohd Fuad Zarkashi - who analysed why the party had done badly in the March 8 polls.

mahathir khir toyo kmu forum 010408 07Mahathir, who took the podium alone at the end, kept his audience captivated for about 30 minutes with his delivery entirely in Bahasa Malaysia.

"Of course, everyone knows that the list of candidates is chosen and submitted to 'Sultan' Abdullah (Ahmad Badawi) by state leaders but once it reached to the party president, somebody else takes over," he said, obviously referring to Khairy.

abdullah ahmad badawi and barisan nasional bn manifesto election 2008"There is somebody in the 'next office' that has a say when choosing the candidates. This led to better and capable Umno candidates being dropped to make way for candidates that ended up losing."

Saying that this nexus is destroying Umno, Mahathir told his audience with trademark sarcasm: "But this is just a rumour, don't listen to my bad mouth!"

khairy jamaluddin interview 011107 assuresTo thunderous applause, he continued the verbal offensive against Khairy (right), painting him as a power-broker in Umno and a significant influence on Abdullah's every decision in politics and economics.

"The baffling thing is why Umno leaders so afraid of this kid. The ministers should have no problem to tenyeh (smash) this kid, but it seems that they are too afraid and I don't know why," Mahathir said.

Abdullah 'shameless'

Predictably, Abdullah was pulled into the tirade for his weak leadership of the party and country.

"Crises in Umno are normal. When leaders at the time of each crisis could not handle it well,

for the sake of the party, they resigned. This particular leader, however, has refused to do so.

"This leader is the country's only prime minister to ever come from an opposition state (Penang)...," said Mahathir.

Loud laughter prompted him to pause before he completed his statement to more laughter: "When I was prime minister, the state I come from (Kedah) belonged to BN. Has he (Abdullah) no shame?"

Mahathir said he believes that Abdullah has no option but to step down in order to save Umno from further humiliation and destruction.

ku li tengku razaleigh and umno agm 241106In this respect, he expressed support for Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's call for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) to be held immediately.

"Umno must conduct an immediate review of the party's poor performance. The EGM must also discuss the possibility of amending the party constitution," Mahathir said, explaining that this would enable other leaders to mount a serious challenge for the top post.

umno party post polls quotaUmno rules stipulate that any candidate who wants to contest for the presidency must obtain 30 percent of the nominations (currently, 58 of the 193 divisions). The rule was introduced during Mahathir's tenure "to ensure that only serious candidates" offer their candidacy.

However, he is now of the view that "times have changed" and that abolition of the quota system would not be detrimental to the party in any way.

"In my time, if anybody wanted to challenge me it was permissible to do so as long as (they had) sufficient support. I never stopped anybody from challenging me," he said.

"But now the quota system has been abused to quell any challenges to the presidency post and this is not right. It must be changed."

He also fielded questions at the end of his presentation, including:

Do you think that Najib Abdul Razak is still capable of becoming a good successor now that he seemed to be Pak Lah's 'yes' man?

Mahathir: We cannot be exact any more about anything. That is why we need to amend the party constitution so that more capable candidates can challenge if the leadership is seen to be weak.

What is your reply to Zam (former information minister Zainuddin Maidin) who blamed you as a factor for BN's poor performance in the polls?

(With a smirk) Yes, I admit this. I don't want to be seen as supporting a weak leader. I will never support a weak leader. BN people voted against BN because of the party's weak leadership so I don't mind being blamed for it.

Later, when asked if he would lead a movement to reform Umno, he asked for stronger support for the suggestion, saying "we have to fight together".

There was no doubt of his popularity in this quarter of the party. As he was escorted to his car, it was to shouts of Hidup Mahathir!

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