

PAS veep tells Umno to ditch Abdullah
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Umno has received a timely advice from an unlikely source as the powerful ruling party's internal crisis intensified after Barisan Nasional's unprecedented electoral defeat on March 8. MCPX

Giving his unsolicited suggestion, PAS vice-president Husam Musa said Umno members should show embattled party chief Abdullah Ahmad Badawi the exit before the party is shown the exit from the government.

husam musa bangsar 080408 rightIn an interview with Malaysiakini on Monday, the Kelantan-based PAS leader argued that Umno members should rethink whether they want a weak Umno - the backbone of BN - under Abdullah as the party faces a risk of being overthrown "anytime after April".

"The Umno ship is going to sink through his leadership. For us in the opposition, it's good to have a weak opponent but it's bad for the nation because we can't move forward with a weak leader," he said in the hour-long interview in Kuala Lumpur.

"Umno can continue to have him as prime minister and president, we don't mind. Abdullah wants to wait until December 2008 to see whether he still gets the support, but he can't prevent anything that is going to happen before December," the PAS leader added.

Umno is to hold its party polls during its annual general meeting in December. So far, former party vice president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah has offered himself to contest for the top post.

Anwar's eligibility to contest

The possible scenario, Husam suggested, would include the ambitious Pakatan Rakyat to take over the federal government if some 30 BN MPs defected to the opposition alliance. Such a crossover would allow the opposition coalition to gain a simple majority.

anwar ibrahim pc 180208 01"(PKR de facto leader) Anwar Ibrahim is eligible to contest anytime after April... When he goes in (Parliament), I don't think he will just go in as an ordinary MP. With Anwar inside the House, anything can happen," argued Husam further.

Anwar's ban from active politics, a result of his conviction under corruption charge, will be lifted on April 15, next Tuesday. The opposition figurehead is widely speculated to contest in a by-election for him to make a comeback to Parliament.

Calls on Abdullah to step down as Umno president and prime minister - a post which he held since 2003 - over the dismay election results have grown louder in recent weeks, alluding to a damaging internal crisis in the party.

Abdullah however has defiantly said he would hold on the premiership and would wait till the Umno party's election in December to let the party delegates decide his fate as the leader.

abdullah ahmad badawi investment malaysia 250308 03"Abdullah claims he still has the supports but that is not true, the only support he got came from the 'fixed deposit' from Sabah and Sarawak," added Husam.

Contrary to common political analysts' views, Husam also argued the post-election cabinet line-up introduced by Abdullah has not helped to strengthen the latter's position as premier.

He was of the view that the new cabinet was 'tainted' by figures such as de facto law minister Zaid Ibrahim and Rural and Regional Development Minister Muhammad Muhd Taib.

Zaid was found guilty of money politics by the Umno disciplinary board in 2005 while Muhammad was charged - but cleared later - in Australia in 1996 of making false declaration on carrying in the equivalent of RM2.4 million in different currencies.

Wrong to blame Razaleigh

On BN's performance in Kelantan, Husam - a leading potential successor to Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat - said it was wrong for Abdullah to point fingers at Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who is also Kelantan's Gua Musang MP.

umno 2007 tengku razaleigh ku li 081107The PAS politician pointed out that if Razaleigh was to be blamed for the BN's performance in Kelantan, it would be worse off for Abdullah who as the BN chief lost in four other states.

"Furthermore, Tengku Razaleigh has never been given the (Kelantan Umno) state chief post or any prominent role. He was not consulted on major decision about Kelantan," argued Husam.

After coming under continuous attack, Abdullah went offensive over the weekend by firing back at his leading critics which included his predecessor Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Anwar and Razaleigh.

The premier said Razaleigh "should look at himself" as to why Kelantan remained in PAS hands and alleged the latter had made no effort to help BN to recapture Kelantan from PAS.