

**Mahathir quits Umno**  
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**Ahti Veeranggan**

Former Umno president Dr Mahathir Mohamad today announced that he was quitting Umno with immediate effect and urged other members to follow him.  
MCPX

mahathir and umno 190508He said he was quitting the party, which he had led for almost 22 years until handing over the reins to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2003, as a sign of no confidence in his successor's leadership.

"I will only come back to the party when there is a change in leadership," the ex-premier told a 1,200-strong crowd at a forum in his home state of Kedah this morning.

He also called on all Umno ministers, deputy ministers and all levels of party leaders to join him in leaving the party. However, he asked these members not to join other political parties.

"Wait till Abdullah quit as the prime minister and party president and then we can return to Umno," he said.

Mahathir dropped the bombshell after his 90-minute speech at the 'The Position of Malays post-12th General Elections' at a hotel in Alor Star.

His resignation - which appeared to be impromptu - has upped the ante in his bid to force Umno president Abdullah to step down in the wake of the ruling coalition's worst electoral setback in the March 8 polls.

"I will not ask others to do something that I dare not do.

"I would rather do it myself first before calling on others to quit party," Mahathir, who was the country's fourth prime minister between 1981 and 2003, told journalists after speaking at the forum.

Mahathir urged other party members to follow his lead, in a call analysts said could herald a mass exodus that could potentially split the party and topple the government.

"One way is for us to leave the party in large numbers. This doesn't mean that we should join the opposition. This is the only power that we have in our hands," he said.

In an immediate response, another party elder, Sanusi Junid, who is a Mahathir loyalist and a former chief minister of Kedah, had also announced his decision to quit Umno.

Later in the day Mahathir announced in his blog that his wife too had quit the party.

**'We don't want you anymore'**

Earlier, speaking at the packed hotel ballroom, Mahathir called on party leaders and members from all levels to quit the party to force Abdullah to step down to send an

unambiguous message to the prime minister that "we don't want you anymore".

mahathir quits umno pc 190508 02 "We cannot afford to wait until the party polls because no division would dare to nominate another person, other than Abdullah for the top post.

"So the best way is to force him (Abdullah) to leave by us quitting first," he said.

However, Mahathir's own decision to quit came only after his speech when he was challenged by a member of the crowd to lead the way in rejecting the party.

Without missing a beat, Mahathir took the microphone and responded that he would do so.

"I declare today I'm quitting Umno because I could not stand with Abdullah's leadership any longer," he told the shocked crowd during the 45-minute question-and-answer session.

mahathir quits umno pc 190508 01 When pressed by others from floor on whether he was serious about the matter, he stressed that he was a man of principle and would not back out from his decision.

"I will keep my word to quit party until Abdullah steps down," he added.

Even though opposition parties PKR and PAS would welcome estranged Umno members, he said it would defeat the purpose if members quit only to join them.

"Our objective to quit is to force Abdullah to step down.

"Once he has quit his positions, then we all shall return to revitalise the party," he told a cheering crowd.

### **Umno no longer the same party**

Mahathir said he could no longer subscribe to Abdullah's political stewardship in both Umno and the government due to the latter's incompetency.

He added that Umno was no longer the same party when it was formed on May 11, 62 years ago.

"Then Umno fought for the Malay interests, rights and privileges.

"But now it has become a party merely to support Abdullah's fragile leadership, serve his, his family's and his cronies' interests.

"Due to this, I'm relinquishing my Umno life membership," he said, adding that he would write a letter immediately to the party secretary-general to that effect.

When asked whether his shocking departure from the party would put pressure on premier to quit, he said he was not sure about it because "this man (Abdullah) seems could not understand anything."

On whether his resignation would trigger a resignation spree among Umno leaders and members, Mahathir said they would do so if they loved the party.

"They must have the courage to do it," he said. "If they love Umno and want Umno to survive, then they have to resign as a show of no confidence on Abdullah's leadership.

"However, if they love Abdullah more than the party then they would not quit," he said.

Mahathir said he believed his move to leave Umno would not have an impact on the politics of the Malays.

"I was once thrown out of Umno and the Malay politics did not fade away. If the Malays want to correct the situation, it's not because of my quitting.

If they are brave to save the party and the party's struggles, they must be brave to act," he said.

### **Mahathir - Umno Baru No 1 member**

Mahathir, 82, joined Umno at its inception in 1946 and in recent years has been Abdullah's most vocal critic.

He entered active politics as a member of Parliament for Kedah's Kota Star Selatan in 1964.

He lost the seat in the disastrous 1969 general elections, and was expelled from the party after attacking then president and prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Mahathir was invited back into the party by second prime minister, Abdul Razak, and re-elected to Parliament in 1974 for the seat of Kubang Pasu, also in Kedah.

Soon after he was appointed education minister. Within four years he was deputy leader of the party, and in 1981, became prime minister.

When Umno split into two as a result of a bitter factional feud and the party deregistered after a legal battle a year later, Mahathir formed Umno Baru and he was the new party's first member.

Meanwhile, rival leader Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who narrowly lost to Mahathir in the leadership contest, went on to set up Semangat 46.

Razaleigh and his party returned to Umno's fold in 1996 and the veteran Umno leader is now challenging Abdullah in the party polls to be held in December.

In response to Mahathir's announcement today, Razaleigh said he would remain in Umno to challenge Abdullah's leadership.