

Shahrir: Prepare for another general election
Malaysiakini.com
May 19, 2008

In the wake of the shocking news that former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad had quit Umno, a senior party leader said that the country could face another general elections.
MCPX

y4c nep forum 060207 shahrir samadShahrir Samad, the minister for domestic trade and consumer affairs, said Mahathir's surprise move could trigger a flurry of resignations from the embattled party that could force Abdullah to hold fresh general elections.

"By Tun doing this it could cause a situation where many other Umno lawmakers might resign," he said, using Mahathir's honorific title.

"If this happens then the government has no choice but to form a new government or call a fresh general election," Shahrir told AFP.

"Certainly it is not helpful or constructive to the struggle of Umno right now," he said, as the party fends off a challenge from opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim who says he could soon seize power with the help of defectors.

Shahrir, who is Johor Baru parliamentarian and Umno supreme council member, said that while Anwar was threatening to snatch MPs from the smaller parties with which Umno rules in coalition, Mahathir could chip away at the ranks of the ruling party itself.

"This will be a reduction of the number of Umno lawmakers which is the ruling party of the present government," he said.

"I suppose it is Mahathir's way of trying to force a call for a referendum from the grassroots."

Should Umno MPs quit the party, they would have to declare themselves as Independents, and this will reduce the majority the government has in Parliament.

PM is like 'horse that has lost its rider'

dr shamsul amriUmno-watcher Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, a political analyst from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, said the resignation was a body blow to Abdullah's chances of clinging on to power.

"Mahathir has just pulled the carpet under his feet because when he leaves Umno I believe many more will follow, especially the elder members of Umno," he said.

Shamsul said Abdullah was totally discredited within his party, and protected from ouster only by tight rules for posing a challenge, which Mahathir himself introduced.

"Within Umno he has no control at all. He's a bit like a horse that has lost its rider," he said.

NONEUmno information chief Muhammad Muhammad Taib told Malaysiakini that he was surprised at Mahathir's abrupt departure.

"Every member has the right to join or leave the party," he said.

Asked whether Umno would convene an emergency meeting in response to the move, he refuted rumours of a hastily convened supreme council meeting tonight.

However, he did not think that there would be a general election anytime soon.

"It is incumbent on Umno MPs to ensure the party stays strong to support the government."

Son: Dr M to send letter to Umno sec-gen

Mahathir, 82, joined Umno at its inception in 1946 and he has weathered a number of storms including his expulsion from the party in 1969 and a 1988 crisis when Umno was declared illegal.

mahathir and umno 190508"Mahathir has resigned from Umno in protest over Pak Lah's continued leadership as both the prime minister and president of Umno," Mokhzani Mahathir told AFP, referring to Abdullah by his nickname.

"He will also write a letter to the Umno secretary-general to inform him of his resignation," he said, adding that Mahathir announced his departure during a speech today in Alor Star, the capital of his home state Kedah.

"He made it clear at the gathering at Alor Star that he is resigning in protest over the current leadership," he said.

Mahathir ruled Malaysia and the dominant Umno for 22 years until 2003 when he handed over to Abdullah, his hand-picked successor.

However in recent times he has been a vocal critic of Abdullah's administration and since disastrous March general elections, which produced Umno's worst ever results, has actively campaigned for him to step down.

Thorn removed

Meanwhile former deputy prime minister Musa Hitam said party members should accept the decision with an open heart and calmness while he believed that it could be a blessing in disguise.

"The thorn in the flesh has been removed and from now, the party leadership must firstly, accept the reality that Umno is not as strong as before or fully accepted by the people, especially the Malays.

"Secondly, it must accept the reality that the "Mahathirism" concept has gone and Umno must return to the 'Bersih, Cekap dan Amanah' (Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy) concept which was accepted very positively by the people in the early 1980's but within a short time, we in Umno lost our way," he said in a SMS statement to Bernama.

"Grab this golden opportunity! Think deeply, carefully and calmly...and return to the original path! When you've done that, remember that what is more important is that Umno is not dreaming for it will all the time fulfill its promises," he added.

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