

Opposition: Mahathir a gutter politician
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Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has announced his MCPX

shocking exit from Umno, "has been and still remains a gutter politician", according to DAP national chairperson Karpal Singh.

karpal mahathir pak lahHe described the ex-Umno president and former premier's action as calculated to "destabilise the government" under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"He has clearly shown that he is incapable of becoming a statesman. He has been, and still remains, a gutter politician," Karpal said in a statement today.

"He should remain a member until he clears his name for the alleged offences committed when he was Umno president and prime minister."

Karpal was referring to a recommendation by the royal commission of inquiry into the VK Lingam tape scandal, stating that six people - including Mahathir - should be further investigated.

Mahathir, who had led Umno for 22 years, announced this morning that he would resigned as a life-time member in protest of Abdullah's leadership. He urged other members to emulate him, but not to join other political parties, and to return to Umno when there is a change in leadership.

Karpal said, however, that Mahathir should not panic and desert his party now.

"One who panics exhibits signs of weakness which does not speak well of a former Umno president and prime minister for more than 21 years," he said.

Karpal recalled that Mahathir had, after the May 13, 1969 race-riots, openly criticised then Umno head and premier Tunku Abdul Rahman.

tunku abdul rahman 01"Tunku never forgave him for his cloak-and-dagger tactics in causing Tunku's downfall in the form of his being obliged to quit as prime minister."

Karpal further pointed out that Mahathir was naive to have publicly admitted that judges had come to lobby him for promotions during his tenure as prime minister.

"It is unbelievable and naive for him to be ignorant (that) lobbying by judges was wrong," he said.

The Bukit Gelugor MP also noted that the image of the judiciary is at its lowest ebb following the recommendations of the royal commission of inquiry.

"It cannot go any lower. We are practically at rock bottom as far as the credibility and independence of the judiciary in the country is concerned."

'Gigantic political earthquake'

DAP secretary-general and Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said Mahathir's resignation will be a "gigantic political earthquake besetting Umno after the political tsunami of March 8".

lim guan eng and dapHe said that the internal rivalry between Mahathir and Abdullah was part of the intense power struggle of disparate vested interests within Umno.

He added that the real issue for Umno is not so much how this power struggle will play out.

"The real challenge will be between undertaking reforms to institutionalise democracy, uphold rule of law and combat corruption - or persist in the tried and failed policies of mediocrity, crony capitalism and violation of basic human rights," he said in a separate statement.

He added that the choice was between Umno moving Malaysia forward or the nation going backwards.

hadi awang and pas

PAS would welcome him

PAS president Abd Hadi Awang meanwhile said that Mahathir's decision was a radical one that only proved that Umno was in a dire situation.

"We feel that his decision only showed that Umno has become unqualified in leading the nation and being the saviours of the Malays," he said in a statement.

He added that PAS and its allies in Pakatan Rakyat had the experience to lead the country for the benefit of all races.

And in Kota Baru, PAS spiritual advisor and Kelantan menteri besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said he was happy by the decision as it would give PAS greater impetus to widen its political influence.

Speaking to reporters at his residence in Kota Baharu, Nik Abdul Aziz said he held Mahathir in high esteem for standing up to the West over the issue of Palestine and Israel for the problems in the Middle East.

He added that PAS would welcome him if he were to join the party as his knowledge and experience could help bring it to even greater heights.