

Hop out of BN, Mahathir tells MPs
Malaysiakini.com
May 21, 2008

Two days after quitting Umno, ex-president and premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has suggested another way to force his successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to step down.

Barisan Nasional MPs should hop out of the coalition, he wrote in a concise 10-point post on his blog, Chedet.com

"We have heard a lot about the possibility of BN members hopping into opposition parties. If 35 members join the opposition, BN will fall. The opposition will win and form the next government," he wrote.

He reasoned that BN representatives should not hop into any opposition party in Pakatan Rakyat.

"What will happen to all the BN party hoppers? They won't become PM because surely the Pakatan leader will become PM. Other Pakatan members will also become ministers and deputy ministers," he explained.

"How many of these posts remain available for BN hoppers? Surely not all of them will get a post. They will continue to be Pakatan followers just like how they followed Abdullah before they hopped (to the opposition)."

Mahathir said these former BN representatives would be free to state their stand on both government and opposition policies (if they become Independents).

The Abdullah administration would fall if a sufficient number of MPs leave the BN, thereby depriving the ruling coalition of even its simple majority in Parliament.

"A new government can only be formed if this is agreed to by those who (have) left BN because they carry enough votes to decide whether BN or Pakatan will acquire the majority in Parliament," he wrote.

"If BN replaces Abdullah with somebody who is brave, those who left the coalition can give their support back to BN so it can become the government again.

"This is one way to force Abdullah to resign. After this, all who hopped (out of BN) can return to their respective parties. Believe me, those from the BN component parties who supported the opposition during the 12th general election will (give back) their support to BN after Abdullah is no longer PM."

Mokhzani also quits

Thus far, Mahathir has found few members to emulate his departure from Umno. Parliamentarians from the party backed Abdullah at a meeting yesterday.

Mahathir's son Mukhriz, who is Jerlun MP and who is vying to be Umno Youth chief, did not attend the meeting. He called a press conference to say he would not leave the party, but he too urged Abdullah to step down.

Another son - businessman and former Youth wing treasurer Mokhzani - announced his exit today.

"I made the decision to leave Umno because I agree with my father that Umno is no longer the real Umno like before," he was quoted as saying by Bernama.

Mahathir has said that he will only return to Umno after Abdullah is removed as party president, BN chairperson and prime minister.

The cracks in the relationship between the two started showing when Abdullah delayed or cancelled several projects approved during Mahathir's tenure.

Mahathir's criticism reached its peak after BN's lacklustre performance in the general election on March 8. The coalition lost its commanding majority due to public discontent over economic and social issues, and Abdullah's failure to fulfill his pledges of reform.

Immediately after the polls, Mahathir urged Abdullah to step down and take responsibility for BN's poor performance, a call that has resonated with disenchanting grassroots Umno members.

The party is scheduled to hold its general assembly in December, which is likely to see contests for top posts including the presidency.

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