

Ezam meets PM, rejoins Umno
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Former PKR Youth chief Ezam Mohd Nor held a 30-minute meeting with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Parliament today to submit his application form and a RM100 in lifetime membership fee to rejoin Umno.
MCPX

ezam joins back umno 280508 03Immediately after the meeting, Abdullah held a press conference in which he welcomed Ezam back into Umno.

Ezam was also present but did not say anything. He will hold his own press conference tomorrow morning at 11am.

Abdullah, also the Umno president, said that Ezam had rejoined the party without any conditions or privileges.

"There are no conditions and no special treatment (attached to his membership). He didn't ask for any. All he wants is to serve and fight for the party. We are not assigning him for any particular task. Not yet," he said.

Previously it was widely speculated that Ezam would be given a senatorship and tasked with heading a government-linked company after crossing over to Umno.

"He wants to come back to Umno. I accept him," Abdullah told reporters as a smiling Ezam stood next to him.

"He came to see me and I welcome him. I think he is sincere," Abdullah added.

He also revealed that there were no objections from other Umno members.

"I don't think (there are any objections). He wants to come back to Umno. He will continue to fight for Umno and its causes, not PKR. So I accept it," he said.

Abdullah was also unwilling to speculate on whether there are more PKR members joining Umno.

"I think anybody that joins the party is a boost to the party because they will want to partake in the party's struggles," he stated.

A return, not a crossover

The Umno president also said that Ezam's previous criticisms towards the government will not affect his role in Umno.

"Previously he was outside (Umno), of course he would be critical about the things going on but now he has changed his mind.

"Maybe he was frustrated and having been in both parties, he thinks Umno would be a

better platform to further his interests," he said.

ezam joins back umno 280508 02"What is special about him is that he left the party under a different leadership and decided to come back to the better party. That is what's special about him," he added.

Abdullah also noted that there were no discussions with Umno Youth about this and described Ezam's entry back into Umno a 'return' rather than a crossover,

Asked whether Ezam will be allowed to contest in the party polls scheduled for December, the premier said it depended whether the party constitution allowed it.

Asked about Ezam having been close to Anwar at one time, Abdullah said Ezam was sincere about wanting to return to Umno.

Malaysiakini reported last week that Ezma's crossover has received the approval of both Abdullah and his deputy, Najib Abdul Razak.

The party believes that bringing in the former PKR rising star will not only be strategic in regaining lost support, but also timely in the current political climate.

Umno must learn to accept

Meanwhile, Najib also welcomed Ezam into Umno, stating that he can enlighten Umno members by revealing the reasons as to why he has lost confidence in PKR.

"Ezam knows a lot of things (about PKR) from his time in Keadilan, and he can clarify to us why he is not confident in Keadilan," said Najib at a press conference in Parliament.

Conceding that there may be some mistrust on the part of some Umno members towards Ezam, Najib said Umno members must learn to accept and open the party's doors to everybody who sought to join the party's struggle.

"If we choose (to accept) some but do not choose (to let) others come, it will mean we will lose many people who really do want to support us," he said.

"Although he went against us before, in the history of our struggle, we have accepted a lot of people who had gone against us but insaf (repented) and come to support our party," he added.

"I suppose it's hard to expect 100 percent support, but as long as majority feel it's a good idea..." said Najib, adding that "it is up to Ezam to gain the confidence of all Umno members".

Fall out with Anwar, Azmin

Ezam, a former political secretary to PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, had a bitter fall out with Anwar and vice-president Azmin Ali last year.

ezam joins back umno 280508 04This followed an internal power struggle, which resulted in Ezam quitting the party.

Since then he had been critical of Anwar's style of leadership and Azmin's role as a dominant schemer in the party.

Ezam has concentrated on his anti-corruption NGO, Gerak. He will relinquish his position as its head from next month and will be replaced by Mohd Nazree Yunus.

Ezam played a crucial role in helping Anwar's wife Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail establish the PKR. The party was created after Anwar was fired by then-prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1998 and arrested amid allegations of abuse of power.

Ezam's decision to rejoin Umno is not expected to cause a damaging impact on PKR which is on an unprecedented high after making massive inroads in the March 8 general election.

The party, along with its allies in the Pakatan Rakyat, has managed to deny Umno-led Barisan Nasional two-thirds in the Parliament as well as taken control of five states.

Anwar is even talking about changing the federal government by September, with the help of some defections from BN.

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