

PKR shrugs off defections to Umno
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The opposition PKR today shrugged off a former senior member's defection to ruling party Umno, which came as a rare victory for embattled Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. MCPX

Ezam Mohamad Nor, once a rising star in the opposition PKR, was welcomed back into Umno yesterday.

He had left the party in 1999 after the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim, a one-time deputy premier and now the de facto PKR leader.

Ezam, who had served as Anwar's political secretary, quit PKR last year reputedly after a power struggle with Azmin Ali, who is party's vice-president.

tian chua 03 240505 "Ezam's decision will have little impact on the party. We are on an upward trend now. We have had people who left the party in hard times and we survived," said PKR information chief Tian Chua.

"I suppose we must thank him for joining Umno only after the general election. At any other time, it might have had some impact but now it will not stop our momentum," he told AFP.

Chua: Umno a sinking boat

The three-party opposition alliance dealt a severe blow to the Umno-led coalition in March 8 general elections, seizing control of five states and a third of parliamentary seats in an unprecedented result.

Anwar has said he is confident of attracting enough defecting lawmakers to topple Abdullah's administration, which has been thrown into crisis by the election drubbing.

"There have been even worse betrayals. I don't think this will affect Anwar that much ... Umno is a sinking boat," Chua said.

ezam joins back umno 280508 01 Ezam's return to Umno was splashed in the government-linked media today, with prominent photographs of him handing his membership registration form to Abdullah.

"No conditions are attached to Ezam's readmission. He does not get any special treatment or privileges. He has also not sought any position. He just wants to serve and struggle for the party," Abdullah reportedly said.