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Former PM Mahathir backs Razaleigh on EGM

KUALA LUMPUR: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad backs Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's proposal for Umno to hold a special extraordinary general meeting (EGM) to discuss the party's poor performance in the general election, but is non-committal on his offer to contest the party presidency.

"I fully support Tengku Razaleigh's idea to hold the EGM but about choosing the president, it should come later. The issue is Umno, not the president," he told reporters after launching a book, *Management Astray* written by the late Tan Sri Basir Ismail here yesterday.

"We don't like a split and sometimes, discussions and negotiations may be the best

approach to resolve problems so that all parties can voice their opinions," said Dr Mahathir, who quit as Umno president and Prime Minister in 2003.

He pointed out that Umno split twice but each time the division did not last long.

"Ku Li (Tengku Razaleigh) had split from Umno and then returned after disbanding Semangat 46. Anwar (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) split and then formed Parti Keadilan (now Parti Keadilan Rakyat) but in the 2004 general election Umno remained solid. Barisan Nasional won 90% support and PKR lost which meant people don't support them."

Dr Mahathir reiterated that during the March 8 general election, many Umno members voted for the Opposition not because they

supported the Opposition but because they did not like the party leadership.

However, he said these people feared that action would be taken against them if they voiced their opinions.

"This is because we are living in an atmosphere of fear. Now, we cannot voice our view except for saying we support the leadership. That is not the culture of Umno."

He said when he proposed that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi take full responsibility for Barisan Nasional's setback and step down, not a single Umno leader dared to support him although they expressed their dissatisfaction about the party leadership whenever they met him.

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