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Listen to the people, Mukhriz to BN leaders

BUKIT MERTAJAM:

A day after his father asked Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to resign over the Barisan Nasional's big losses in the general election, Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir appealed yesterday to the top BN leadership to listen to the people.

"The results of the 12th general election are a very clear message and signal from the people and I appeal to the leadership to take cognisance of the people's wishes and to take the correct initiatives to remedy the situation," the new Jerlun MP told a packed ballroom of a hotel in Prai.

"We accept in whole humility the people's choice and this has been a very humbling experience."

Before the press conference, it was widely speculated that Mukhriz was going to echo what Mahathir had said.

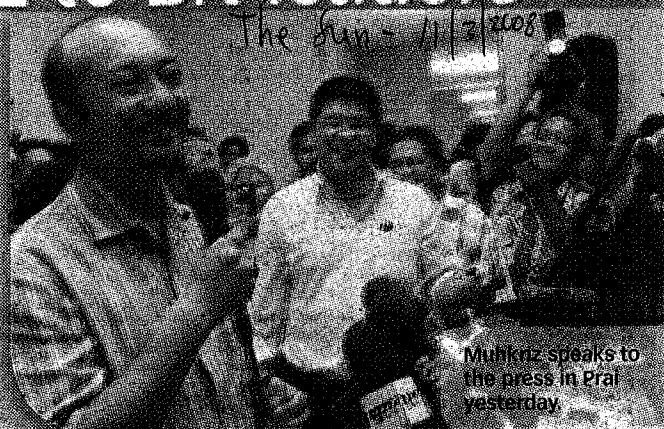
The 20-minute conference attracted full media attendance and some 300 people from various Umno divisions.

Mukhriz said the coalition must take steps to regain the people's confidence in BN and in Umno, and asked the supporters to remain calm and rational.

Asked to define the actions he had in mind and if it included asking Abdullah to step down, Mukhriz said: "We are appealing to the top leadership to listen to the people's wishes to see perhaps some change. I cannot say for sure what that change would be but I am confident that the BN and Umno will use its own machinery to take the remedial action."

He expected that this issue would come up at all levels of Umno, including at the party's General Assembly slotted for August, and deflected repeated questions asking him to spell out what he meant by remedial action.

Mukhriz described BN's performance and the loss of four states plus PAS's retention of Kelantan as "unprecedented and an unmitigated situation" but added that he was happy



Mukhriz speaks to the press in Prai yesterday

that the BN was still in control at the federal level.

On whether Abdullah should take responsibility for this, he said: "I think all of us have to take responsibility. It's not new and these matters were discussed even well before the election.

"The people's voice was heard at many forums but sometimes we were not listening; but now it is very clear."

Mukhriz said the people's message since Saturday was one of dissatisfaction and of the government not addressing or dealing with issues that are close to the people's heart.

"We may know the problem but we were not providing the answer. But I believe the government that will be formed will be one that will heed the people's wishes," he said, dismissing votes of no-confidence against Abdullah and opinions that there was anger among the grassroots.

Mukhriz had originally scheduled to hold the conference at another hotel but about an hour later, changed the venue, discreetly.

The crowd there had grown to some 500 people, and there were whispers amongst Mukhriz's supporters of another group gathered there, purportedly to stop him from entering the hotel.

On why there was such a big group at a press conference to make a simple statement, Mukhriz said with a smile: "They're just friends."

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