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Shahrir: Dr M's support not relevant to Barisan

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IMPACT: Coalition, Umno will bounce back in polls, says backbenchers' chief

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Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club chairman **Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad** (centre) with members of parliament at the press conference at Parliament lobby yesterday. Pic by Yazit Razali

BARISAN Nasional's performance in the next general election will not be affected if it loses support from former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

BN Backbenchers Club (BNBBC) chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad said the former premier's lack of support during the 12th and 13th general elections had little impact on the ruling coalition's standing in the country.

"He campaigned against BN when he was against (former prime minister) Pak Lah (Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) in 2008. Support for BN dropped.

"In 2013, he then campaigned for BN, but we still lost with a reduced margin. So do you think he (Dr Mahathir) is still relevant?"

He said this when asked of the possibility of BN losing support in the 14th General Election, following continuous criticisms and attacks by Dr Mahathir.

Shahrir said he was confident that BN and Umno would be able to bounce back as it had faced more challenging times in the past.

"We have about two to three years more. We still have time," Shahrir said.

He said none of the BN members of parliament were involved in a conspiracy to topple the government, as alleged in recent reports on blogs and social media.

Shahrir said such allegations were baseless and dismissed rumours that there was a clandestine movement to overthrow the government.

"Reports that say there are 20 BN MPs involved is a made-up. It's not true at all.

"None of us were contacted or have contacted anyone regarding such plots or moves to overthrow the government or prime minister," he said at a press conference in the Parliament lobby yesterday, along

with 33 other BN lawmakers.

Shahrir said although there were disagreements on certain moves and policies made by the government, he stressed that BN MPs continued to give their undivided support to the country's leaders.

He clarified that the allegations were made by the blogs and not Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

On Saturday, Zahid, who is also Umno vice-president, said he had evidence that there was a plot by an Umno leader to topple the government.

During his speech at the Jempol Umno division meeting, Zahid said the proof was in the form of statutory declarations targeted at 37 BN MPs, which were also prepared for

87 opposition MPs and one independent. Zahid, however, did not name the Umno leader.

Following his speech, reports then emerged naming 20 BN lawmakers, which included former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Mohd ShaHe Apdal, and former natural resources and environment minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel.

Shahrir said that Zahid did not mention that the 20 people were involved and questioned how the blogs came up with the names.

"How did they come up with the story? Where did they get the information from?" he asked, adding that they would meet Zahid to seek clarification on the matter. **Additional reporting by Fazleena Aziz**