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ZAHID FIRES BROADSIDE AT DR M

'Who wants you, anyway?'

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TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been roundly criticised by Umno leaders for vowing he will never return to the party fold, despite declaring last year that he was still an Umno man at heart.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi yesterday launched a broadside at the former prime minister, saying Dr Mahathir was no longer welcome in the party that he once helmed for more than two decades.

"Yesterday (Friday), he said he will never go back to Umno. But, who wants you, anyway?" said Zahid in his opening speech at the Kota Melaka Umno division delegates' meeting here.

Zahid is believed to be referring to Dr Mahathir, who on Friday, ruled out ever returning to Umno "even if Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is ousted" from power.

Zahid recited a poem in Malay, in an apparent jab at Dr Mahathir, which read: "Pinggir tak retak, nasi tak dingin, Engkau tak hendak, kami pun tak ingin".

"When it's time to go, just go. We (in Umno) have given him 22 years (to serve). If he wants to become the prime minister again, it means that he is crazy," said Zahid, in apparent reference to Dr Mahathir's recent state-

ment that he was open to the idea of becoming prime minister if Pakatan Harapan won the 14th General Election.

Dr Mahathir, who is now Pakatan Harapan chairman, quit Umno on Feb 29 last year, saying he was "too embarrassed" to be associated with the party that he claimed was seen to be supporting corruption.

It was the second time Dr Mahathir left Umno. He first quit the party in May 2008 after criticising his successor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's style of administration.

In **Permaisuri**, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein echoed a similar sentiment, saying it would not make a difference whether Dr Mahathir rejoined Umno.

Hishammuddin said this was because Dr Mahathir had twice turned his back on Umno, a party he had led for 22 years.

"Therefore, it makes no difference to party leaders and grassroots members whether he is in or out.

"We have gone past the stage of having to worry about this," said Hishammuddin at the Setiu Umno division delegates' meeting yesterday.

He said it was time for the party and its members to move on, instead of paying too much attention to Dr Mahathir's "antics".

"We are united in our fight to remain together and carry on. Dr Mahathir's decision has no effect on the party or us at all."

In **Langkawi**, Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said Dr Mahathir would not be made the next prime minister if Pakatan Harapan won GE14.

She said it was DAP adviser Lim

Kit Siang who would be appointed as the next prime minister as the latter commanded strong support in Pakatan Harapan.

"The rumours that Dr Mahathir is the prime minister-designate for Pakatan Harapan are just an illusion because it is Lim who is craving the post.

"It is obvious that the decision made in Pakatan Harapan has to be finalised by Lim and DAP," she said when opening the Langkawi Wanita Umno division delegates' meeting yesterday.

"Wanita Umno believes that Lim will have the final say on the prime ministerial candidate.

"The other parties (in Pakatan Harapan) will be subservient to DAP because it has the largest number of seats in Parliament (among the opposition).

"So, Malaysians must understand that this is a political ploy by Pakatan Harapan to fish for votes in GE14," she said.

In **Baling**, Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said Dr Mahathir's statement was not surprising.

He said this was because Dr Mahathir had "reached the point of no return" after relentlessly

attacking Najib, who is also Umno president.

"For us (in Umno), his stand is irrelevant. What is important is that Umno members must stand united to defend the prime minister's leadership and to uphold Islam and the interests of the Bumiputera community," he said after opening the Baling Umno Youth annual delegates' meeting yesterday.

Mustapa, who is also Kelantan Umno liaison committee chairman, said it was clear that Umno had regained the support of the people despite Dr Mahathir's attacks on Najib.

"We can see today that the party president (Najib) commands strong support not only from within Umno, but also from fence sitters, thanks to several transformation agendas rolled out by the prime minister."

Mustapa said although he was indebted to Dr Mahathir for appointing him as a minister in the past, he could not defend the former premier's act of working with opposition parties, in particular DAP.

In **Kota Kinabalu**, Sabah Wanita Umno vice-chief Datuk Jainab Ahmad Ayid said Dr Mahathir's

"fickle" behaviour showed that the 92-year-old politician could not be trusted.

"To me, it is simple. Tun Mahathir is constantly changing his mind and that is his view. Therefore, the people must know how to think and analyse.

"Let the people be the judge of what sort of person he is. Is he fickle-minded?" she asked.

In **Ipoh**, Perak Umno liaison committee deputy chairman Datuk Saarani Mohamed said it was time for Dr Mahathir to accept today's political reality and move on.

He said Umno leaders came and went but the party's mission remained constant.

"Regardless who leads the party, Umno has always been relevant. Its leadership adapts to the changing times.

"His (Dr Mahathir) decision to leave the party last year was on his own accord. His time has passed. God willing, the party will survive regardless who takes over the leadership.

"We have the same goal and aim, which is to help the people and I believe no Umno leader will deviate from that," he said yesterday.

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