

'Dr M backing Shafie just to stop defections from Warisan'

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PEKAN: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's move to throw his weight behind Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal to become the next prime minister is to stop more Warisan leaders from abandoning the party, said Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He described Dr Mahathir's endorsement of Shafie as a ploy and no one, including Warisan leaders, should fall for the ruse.

"His (Dr Mahathir) move to back Shafie is a strategy to prevent Warisan leaders (assemblymen) from leaving the party.

"Recently, two Upko assemblymen quit the Warisan-led state government and I was informed that many others are expected to follow suit. If more assemblymen quit, the Sabah government will collapse.

"So when Dr Mahathir announced that he endorsed Shafie as the next prime ministerial candidate, he hopes that Warisan leaders will have a change of heart (about quitting the party)



Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob meeting villagers at the Kampung Dusun Orang Asli settlement in Pekan yesterday. PIC BY FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG

and stay to defend Shafie as the chief minister and he goes on to become the prime minister," Ismail Sabri said after meeting villagers at the Kampung Dusun Orang Asli settlement here yesterday.

The senior defence minister said Dr Mahathir's comment had to be seen in another context and one should not be swayed by just looking at it from one angle.

"Do not see the endorsement (of Shafie) only at the surface (level) as there are other (underlying) reasons. This is his trick to prevent Warisan leaders and supporters from leaving.

"So I hope that Warisan, Upko and other party members aligned

to the state government, who plan to quit the party, go ahead with it.

"It is unlikely that whatever Dr Mahathir said will happen," he said.

Ismail Sabri was commenting on Dr Mahathir's pledge to endorse Shafie as Pakatan Harapan Plus prime ministerial candidate in the next general election or in the event of snap polls.

Dr Mahathir said PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was nominated as deputy prime minister 1 while Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia deputy president Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir would be made deputy prime minister 2.