

Dr M backs Mukhriz as next Kedah MB
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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has voiced his support for his son Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir to become the next Kedah menteri besar should Barisan Nasional (BN) win back the state in the 13th general election.

The former prime minister's endorsement of his son will likely add pressure for the state Umno leadership to decide on whether to back Mukhriz as a potential candidate, as support within the party for the deputy international trade and industry minister appears divided at best.

"I would help him but what he does, what position he holds, is up to the party. If he is nominated for menteri besar, I will still support him.

"(The party) normally does not nominate someone for menteri besar; we do not know whether we are going to win so it is usually a nomination of either state or federal seats," said Dr Mahathir in an interview with online television station The Malaysian Observer (MobTv).

He was asked by interviewer Datuk Jahabardeen Md Yunus to comment on speculation of Mukhriz becoming the next Kedah MB if BN wins the state from PAS in GE13.

Mukhriz is currently Kedah Umno deputy chief and Jerlun MP.

But Dr Mahathir conceded that Mukhriz was still "struggling" to establish himself politically, and that he had personally discouraged his children from being active in politics when he was prime minister.

"As far as Mukhriz (is concerned) I knew he was interested (but) by not allowing him to go into politics when I was PM, he couldn't start as early as I did. So he did not have that head start.

"He's struggling, finding things very difficult, he has to establish himself," said the country's longest-serving prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said the main reason why he did not encourage his children to become active in politics when he was PM was because he did not want to be accused of nepotism or trying to create a family legacy.

"It was very selfish, I was thinking about myself... I told them no politics, no business with government. After I retire they can do it," he stressed.

Speculation is rife that Mukhriz will give up his federal seat and contest a state seat in Kedah to boost BN's and Umno's strength and presence.

But it is understood that not all state Umno warlords support the Jerlun MP, and have objected to the latter's push in the state.

BN won only 14 of the 36 state seats in the 2008 general election, while Pakatan Rakyat (PR) won the remaining 22 seats, with PAS claiming victory in 16 of those seats.

Mukhriz has previously conceded that being his father's son has helped his progress in politics, but told Bernama Online in February he was not too concerned being in Dr Mahathir's shadow.

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