

Umno veteran Tamrin Ghafar to join PAS tonight
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SHAH ALAM, Aug 11 — Datuk Tamrin Ghafar, the son of former deputy prime minister Tun Ghafar Baba, will submit his membership form to PAS tonight, sources said, making him the second Umno veteran to leave the ruling Barisan Nasional's (BN) mainstay in a month.

Tamrin's defection, coming on the heels of senior Sabah Umno leader Datuk Seri Lajim Ukin's resignation from his supreme council seat in the Malay party two weeks ago and pledging support to Pakartan Rakyat (PR), is seen as coup for the opposition in the run-up to the 13th general election due soon.

"Tamrin will hand over his membership form to PAS deputy president, Mohamad Sabu.

"Even before this, he has always been giving speeches with Abang Mat everywhere," a PAS official who asked not to be named told The Malaysian Insider. He was referring to Mohamad, popularly known as Mat Sabu.

Tamrin was Batu Berendam MP in Malacca for nearly a decade, from 1986 to 1995. The constituency has been renamed Bukit Katil.

His father, the late Ghafar, had been an Umno strongman since the days of the Malaysia's founding father and first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj. Ghafar had once been Malacca chief minister in the early days of the country's independence.

But Tamrin, the second of Ghafar's 11 children, has been batting for the PR pact in the last few years, alleging that Umno has deviated from its original struggle under Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Najib Razak's leadership.

"Umno has run away from original fight to prioritise the people.

"Under Najib, Umno no longer defends the people but has taken away their rights," he had previously said while on the stump with PR leaders in Kuala Lumpur.

For his open criticism of Umno, Tamrin was given a show-cause letter by the party's disciplinary board on July 26.

PAS has been actively courting and winning over several former pro-establishment figures and top local artistes popular with the Malay community in recent days, in a bid to burnish its progressive Islamist credentials ahead of key polls that must be called by next April.

Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had recently warned Najib against further estranging members of the ruling coalition, saying any defections could "result in BN losing the next election."

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