

Dr M warns Najib of putsch if below GE12 numbers
Malaysian Insider
March 24,2013

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 — Umno will unseat Datuk Seri Najib Razak as its leader if the party president fails to improve the setback of Election 2008 in the coming polls, warns Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister told French news agency AFP that he worried about change, suggesting there will be chaos and religious strife if his Barisan Nasional (BN) lost power.

"Of course, if he does not perform, there will be some necessity to switch horses," the 87-year-old told AFP in his office here.

"There could be a lot of disappointment and maybe a move to challenge him. That is normal."

The news agency noted that such comments carry weight after Dr Mahathir, who retired in 2003, helped dump his own chosen successor, Tun Abdullah Badawi, with cathing criticism a year after the polls debacle in 2008.

It also pointed out that Dr Mahathir is revered by the majority Malays for bringing economic success, stability, and entrenching Malay dominance under his firm grip.

"Mahathir remains very influential within (the ruling party) Umno and continues to command sizeable support among the grassroots," said Ibrahim Suffian, head of leading polling firm Merdeka Center.

But with a rising opposition promising to end authoritarianism, Mahathir is seen trying to protect his legacy.

Dr Mahathir has publicly questioned liberalising gestures by Najib, warning of possible chaos in a multi-racial country where some minority Chinese and Indians resent Malay dominance, AFP added.

It also pointed out that Dr Mahathir was considered close to Najib's deputy, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was seen as a Malay nationalist, and could seek to influence Umno leadership contests expected soon after the general election.

"Najib is under probation and the principal who will decide Najib's future is Mahathir," opposition figure Lim Kit Siang told AFP.

The AFP report also said Dr Mahathir, who moves slowly these days but remains quick-witted, has been relatively quiet in recent years but said his fear of an opposition win had changed that.

"I worry the people (will) change the government. There will be religious strife. If the opposition wins, this country will face a lot of difficulties," he said.

Critics accuse him of being out of step with the national mood and sowing fear, the agency

said, noting they point in particular to his patronage of right-wing Muslim group Perkasa, formed after the 2008 elections, which staunchly defends Malay dominance and is accused of stirring racial and religious tension.

The agency said opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, however, saw Dr Mahathir's re-emergence as a blessing.

Anwar said his old boss was inadvertently helping galvanise support for the opposition's pledge to chart a course away from hardline Mahathir-ism.

"I think it probably helps us," Anwar said with a laugh, according to AFP.

Hakcipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/dr-m-warns-najib-of-putsch-if-below-ge12-numbers/>