

Fight me in Gelang Patah, Kit Siang dares Dr M
Malaysian Insider
April 1, 2013
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 1 – Lim Kit Siang dared his long time arch rival Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today to face-off in Gelang Patah this Election 2013 for a polls contest to determine who should retire from politics first.

The DAP veteran (picture) scoffed at Dr Mahathir for insulting his prolonged career in politics, pointing out that despite the latter's 2003 retirement, he had continued to stay in the limelight.

"It is no exaggeration to say that Dr Mahathir is in fact the 'de facto' prime minister, the person whom Najib fears the most as Dr Mahathir is the man who could still decide Najib's political fate," Lim said, according to his speech text from a ceramah in Taman Molek, Johor Jaya, this afternoon.

The Ipoh Timor MP was referring to Datuk Seri Najib Razak, the second Umno leader to take on the role of prime minister after Dr Mahathir was succeeded by Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Lim said Dr Mahathir never left the political scene even after he stepped down, claiming it had been the influential leader who had "toppled" Abdullah from the post in 2009.

He added that Dr Mahathir had once even threatened to bring Najib down should the latter fail to secure better results in Election 2013 than Abdullah had in the 2008 polls.

In Election 2008, a weakened Barisan Nasional (BN) pact led by Abdullah had suffered its worst ever electoral performance when it lost five states and a federal territory to the federal opposition and even failed to secure its customary two-thirds parliamentary majority.

"With Mahathir still so active in Malaysian and in particular Umno politics, I invite him to come to Gelang Patah to contest in the parliamentary elections and let the people of Johor decide whose political life should be ended, and whether Gelang Patah should be the political 'kubur' (grave) for me or for him," Lim said in the statement.

He was referring to Dr Mahathir's speech when he went on a stump for BN in Johor last night where he urged voters in the Umno bastion to turn the state into Lim's "burial ground".

"Now Lim Kit Siang wants to come to Johor as it's easy for him to win anytime he wants. Johoreans must crush him to the end... to ensure it is his last day in politics," Dr Mahathir had told thousands at a people's housing project launch organised by Pulai Umno outside Hospital Permai.

His highly-publicised appearance came amid almost nightly ceramahs by Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders who are confident of winning several federal and state seats in Umno's birthplace.

The former Umno president and BN chairman had reserved a major part of his speech on

Lim, his political arch-rival from the time he was prime minister in 1982 until retiring in 2003.

"If he wants to contest in Penang, Malacca, we can understand but want to attack Umno's fortress in Johor is stupid, doesn't make sense," Dr Mahathir said of Lim, the veteran DAP leader who counts Johor as his birthplace.

He said DAP leaders should think of retiring after being in politics for a long time as the party had always talked about change.

"He has been around for a long time, wants to bring change but he should change himself. He has been a leader since I was an MP. BN has changed a few times but he hasn't moved.

"What change is that?" Dr Mahathir asked at the event held by Pulai Umno chief Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed. Others present included Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and Kota Tinggi MP Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar.

PR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim recently announced Lim's candidacy in Gelang Patah, an urban BN-held seat in Johor, which the DAP hopes will lead PR's onslaught in a state long considered a BN fortress.

Lim said in his statement that he was willing to submit his political life to Gelang Patah voters, which comprise some 53 per cent Chinese, 33 per cent Malays and over 12 per cent Indians.

He reminded Dr Mahathir that by leaving his Ipoh Timor seat in Perak to contest in Johor, he was putting his own head on the chopping block.

"With such a history of Gelang Patah general election results, Mahathir should be very comfortable to win with a stunning majority in Gelang Patah.

"Is Mahathir prepared to submit his political life to the voters of Gelang Patah?" he asked.

In Election 2008, MCA's Tan Ah Eng had trounced PKR's Dr Zaliha Mustafa with a 8,851 vote majority when she polled 33,630 votes against her contender's 244,779.

"I await Mahathir in Gelang Patah," Lim said.

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