

Dr Mahathir's support or criticism irrelevant in next GE, say BN backbenchers

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Barisan Nasional Backbenchers' Club (BNBBC) chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Samad believes former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's views on the coalition will not have an impact on its performance in the next general election.

Shahrir said BN's performance in the 2008 general election had deteriorated drastically following Dr Mahathir's incessant criticism of the then prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's leadership.

At the same time, the number of votes for BN in the 2013 general election had also reduced although Dr Mahathir had campaigned for the coalition vigorously.

"So is he relevant? I am giving you these facts. We have to put things into perspective," he said at a press conference today.

Dr Mahathir, who was once the supporter of Datuk Seri Najib Razak, is now one of the prime minister's harshest critics.

He has repeatedly asked Najib to step down from his position and more recently, said that Malaysia's future looked grim because the prime minister has "stolen the government", referring to the recent political upheavals in the country.

Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister had also warned BN that it would lose the next general election, due in 2018, if Najib continued to stay in power and had even asked authorities to act against him over the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal.

Najib is the chairman of 1MDB's advisory board and the fund was his brainchild.

Despite this, Shahrir said history has proven that Umno was able to pull through worse episodes than its current turmoil.

He added that the party had continued its winning streak in the elections despite splitting in 1987 leading to the formation of Semangat 46.

He said, taking into account today's atmosphere, Umno had enough time to get itself ready to face the next general election.

"We still have time. The election will only take place in two years' time." – August 18, 2015.

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