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PAS poll of no real consequence

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THE editors of Harakah, PAS' official newsletter, must be enjoying themselves. It is quite rare for them to get the attention of those from Umno, the nemesis of the party they represent.

After two weeks of getting the attention for their Internet polls on who among five top Umno leaders is most trusted to succeed Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister, Harakah's online edition launched another poll.

This time around, it is a poll to determine who among the Barisan Nasional (BN) Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers is the one that the readers respect most. The list starts with Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Penang's Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali (Perak), Datuk Seri Syed Abdul Razak Syed Zain (Kedah), Datuk Seri Mohd Khir Toyo (Selangor), Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad (Negri Sembilan), Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam (Malacca), Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob (Pahang), Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman (Johor), Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud (Sarawak) and Datuk Dr Chong Kah Kiat (Sabah). Excluded from the poll are PAS Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (Kelantan) and Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (Terengganu).

According to Harakah editor Zulkifli Sulong, the exclusion of Nik Aziz and Hadi from the poll was intentional. It would not have been fair to include them as the respondents are mostly PAS members or at least their sympathisers. Chances are the PAS as Menteri Besar will have an overwhelming lead in the polls, he added.

When PAS held the first poll on who is most trusted to succeed Dr Mahathir, quite a number of Umno leaders and members were disturbed by it. Some leaders responded and gave their views about the poll results.

It was pointed out that it was unnecessary for Umno leaders and members to respond to the poll as it was for PAS supporters and their considerations about who among the Umno leaders is best to lead the nation are different from that of Umno's. Then on, it was also pointed out that the nation does not have direct elections for the head of both the state and Federal governments. In short, the poll conducted by Harakah is purely to attract readers with an interesting subject and if it managed to cause a rift or discomfort among Umno members and leaders, it had lived up to its *raison d'etre*.

However, since some Umno leaders decided to react to the first poll, it is not surprising that the Harakah editors had decided to come up with another poll. Any newspaper editor would feel encouraged when readers and leaders react to any part of their published contents. That aside, the second poll on the BN Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers is actually quite interesting. Three days into the polling, topping the list is Dr Koh followed by Tajol Rosli and Ghani. The lowest in the ranking is Isa with Adnan and Shahidan just a couple of notches above him, respectively.

It is no doubt difficult to ascertain if a national poll or an Umno poll is conducted on the same subject that the outcome would have been quite similar or at least close.

Whatever it is, the results showing Dr Koh, Tajol Rosli and Ghani topping the poll are actually not very surprising. After all, all three of these executive heads at state level are among those considered good and capable.

What could have been the respondents' considerations in making those

choices? Apart from that, the poll if scrutinised closely also exposes the thoughts of PAS supporters and how they view individuals in BN and Umno. Looking at the three personalities - Dr Koh, Tajol Rosli and Ghani - there are some similar traits in them which are quite apparent. Dr Koh, Ghani and Tajol Rosli are all soft-spoken, non-controversial and considered able, meaning having the brains and good academic qualifications accompanying them.

What may be surprising is that most of the PAS supporters participating in the poll chose Dr Koh, a non-Muslim. However, this is again understandable. For one, Dr Koh is from Gerakan and it is not deemed as a party which is an enemy to PAS. Furthermore, Dr Koh is not noted to be one who spew venom in his comments about PAS.

Finally, it proves that to PAS supporters their enemy is not Gerakan or other non-Malay parties but Umno and that is something very consistent with the party's political power play. It is probably for similar reasons that Dr Chong, who is only into his second year as the Chief Minister, scored a commendable fourth place in the poll. Some of the BN leaders who were ranked lowly in the poll may feel bad and upset but they should probably look at the bright side. The reasons could very well be because they had been effective in BN and Umno's efforts to reduce or stop PAS' attempts to move into their territory.

While such thoughts should pacify them, if the poll managed to ruffled them in any way, in the final analysis, all of them should accept that such a poll is a political assessment which need not necessarily be objective. However, if the result continues to bother these leaders, then they should probably start searching deep into their conscience. They will definitely find the answers.

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