

PMs-in-waiting - a thorn in Pakatan's side
MalaysiaKini.com
December 18, 2012
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COMMENT DAP has been consistent - it is solidly behind Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim's candidacy for the premiership should Pakatan Rakyat attain power in the next general election.

DAP chairperson Karpal Singh reiterated the party's stand at its 16th national congress in Penang over the weekend.

All of Malaysia is clear that Anwar (right) is DAP's man for the coveted post.

But the same cannot be said of PAS. It has another candidate in mind - its president Abdul Hadi Awang.

This situation of two 'PMs-in-waiting' is a thorn in Pakatan's side. It is not doing the coalition any good. In fact, it threatens to drive a deep wedge into its unity armour, if it has not done so already.

Going into the 2008 general election, Pakatan did not even utter a squeak about a prime ministerial candidate. Why, it did not even have enough credible candidates, quickly cobbling together a team which, unfortunately, also comprised of 'toads and frogs' as we discovered later.

However, this round is different. For the first time, Pakatan feels an upset is possible. Some say it looks imminent. The stakes are very high. It is ready to take over the national leadership.

Is it? It does not look very comforting or reassuring for Malaysians if there is no single national leader to take over or lead a federal government.

Don't give us 'bull' that Pakatan will choose one after victory is attained. Saying that 'we win first and then decide later' does not hold in this case.

Supporters may think this way instead - after winning, the component parties will argue and fight over who is to be the leader. That would be a sign of a disunited and shaky administration, and will not signal a promising start for a new federal government.

It does not work this way for ordinary Malaysians who are not used to the intrigues of political plots and games of lies and deceit. They just want a decent and honest leader and it would be of great comfort to them if Pakatan could just agree on one name instead of dilly-dallying over its choice.

I do find it funny, fishy even, that Pakatan now has to fight over who is to be prime minister.

Why? Right from the birth of Pakatan, there was a tacit understanding that Anwar was the supremo of the coalition and the natural choice to assume the post.

Just three months ago, Hadi (left) was reported to have said that he is not keen on contesting the upcoming general election.

It was Anwar who shot down the idea, saying that Hadi's services are still needed.

Then came the PAS muktamar last month, during which several delegates hailed Hadi as the next prime minister. It's clear that many supporters want to ensure that he is destined for bigger things, one of which is to become prime minister.

The PAS ulama's push for Hadi to be made prime minister is more serious than what some party leaders would want it to be.

This could also be possibly due to the split between the conservative ulama and the liberals in the party. It is an open secret that the PAS liberals are close to Anwar and that they share the DAP's ambition to make him prime minister.

Glaring disunity

The push for Hadi is a heady notion indeed, or as Hadi himself put it, "syiok" (thrilling). Of course, he did not realise that this remark would provide fodder for the media.

After Anwar snapped that he was willing to discuss the matter, the mainstream press went into overdrive. As expected, the issue was played up negatively against Pakatan, so much so that the PAS leadership has had to step in.

PAS secretary-general Mustafa Ali (left) moved quickly to clarify that it is not the party's official stance to endorse Hadi as premier.

Mustafa also reminded coalition leaders and supporters that the question of who will become the prime minister under a Pakatan government should not be turned into a polemic.

He pointed out that the matter was only raised during the debate and was not part of any declaration at the muktamar.

That is a valid explanation, of course. But the timing of such a request so close to a general election does not bode well for Pakatan.

Call it democracy and freedom of speech, but I would have thought that certain topics should not have been brought up for debate at the muktamar.

It does not speak well of the coalition to bring its disagreements on major issues out in the open, or to wash its dirty linen in public at the eleventh hour.

If anything else, it only exposes the glaring disunity and lack of understanding and cohesion among Pakatan partners.

BN leaders are now saying that the 'PM dispute' between PAS and DAP has exposed Pakatan's greed for power.

A section of voters must now be wondering whether they should go for such a fragile partnership like Pakatan. Some could be thinking that perhaps BN, being more stable, is a safer bet. Talk about the devil you know, to quote Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Make a decision now

So is Hadi prime ministerial material? It depends on who you talk to.

Popular blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin (left), in his usual sarcastic tone, ranted: "Oh, Hadi Awang is not acceptable. It must be Anwar Ibrahim. PAS leaders are not suitable or good enough. They are not intelligent enough.

"They can't even speak English the Winston Churchill way. PAS leaders are more suited for the kampong, not for the international stage. PAS leaders will never be able to run the country. They can't even run the state properly."

PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu, who is not an ulama, doesn't think his boss is PM-material either. Ha, we can only guess what the boss feels about his deputy now.

At the muktamar, Mat Sabu said Anwar is the undisputed choice but the following day, said the final decision rests with the Pakatan leadership.

Meanwhile, we only know too well that DAP and PKR leaders have been stressing on the consensus that Anwar is the anointed one.

DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang must have declared his party's stand in backing Anwar a million times, particularly since PAS has not given up the hudud law agenda.

"Making Anwar the default prime minister could calm the Chinese community. Anwar is also more suitable than Hadi in terms of capacity, because Anwar has a wealth of administrative experience, while Hadi is an expert in religion, but not economy," Lim has said.

But PAS loyalists insist that their president has the best credentials to be PM as he has no scandals plaguing him, is a devout Muslim and is president of the biggest party in Pakatan.

Whatever it may be, Pakatan must decide once and for all who it wants as prime minister if

the coalition comes into power - Anwar or Hadi.

However, one fact is known to all - don't expect Anwar to settle for anything less than the prime minister's post or to play second-fiddle to Hadi.

As for the DAP, Karpal (left) must have accepted his political fate - that he can never ever be prime minister.

What a shame, really. The world's biggest democracy, India, is okay with a minority Sikh, Manmohan Singh, as prime minister.

Malaysia is only a tiny democracy with an over-flow of politicians having pea-size brains. Hence, they always think small.

That's why Pakatan cannot even agree on a prime ministerial candidate but is ambitious enough to desire a takeover of Putrajaya.

God, help Malaysia and Malaysians.

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Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/216899>