

## **Minister Khairy BN's weapon to regain youth support**

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**By Aidila Razak**

Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin's debut in the cabinet as youth and sports minister shows that the BN is bringing in the big guns to arrest its slide in support from the youth.

Analysts say this is because the post, albeit traditionally considered a junior portfolio, will play a pivotal role in the next five years as BN attempts to arrest its continuing fall in support from the younger generation.

"I am a little disappointed that Khairy was not given a bigger responsibility as he is more talented and can contribute much more than the youth and sports portfolio.

"However, this portfolio may be a key ministry for this administration, seeing how the BN has lost support among the young voters.

"If anyone can solve the problem, it is Khairy and it is a sign that the youth will now get a lot of attention from this administration," Ideas chief executive Wan Saiful Wan Jan said.

Wan Saiful said Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was also taking a more progressive stance by putting younger, more vocal MPs like Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan (left) into the cabinet.

"It is a brilliant move, although Abdul Rahman's portfolio (Housing and Urban Well-being) does appear to be more senior than Youth and Sports," he added.

UKM political science professor Jayum Jawan said the appointments of Khairy and Abdul Rahman were "well thought of".

Jayum said although Khairy's appointment has been long-awaited, it had done the youth leader some good to have been sidelined earlier.

"He has shown maturity in the three to four years (that he has been sidelined) and his inclusion augurs well with BN's intentions to engage the youth," he said.

Unprecedented numbers from Sabah and Sarawak

The Sarawakian said the new cabinet was also a first in terms of representation from Sabah and Sarawak, with a whopping 13 full ministers from the East Malaysian states.

Sarawak alone has eight ministers, four from the PBB and two each from PRS and SUPP.

"It is the highest number of Sarawak representation (in the cabinet) and it is well-deserved after the state delivered so many seats to the BN," Jayum said.

He said the BN could, through the line-up, show that it "is sharing the spoils" but whether this would be meaningful power-sharing was up for debate.

"I would have liked to see more 'real power-sharing' because the key ministries are still held by Umno members.

"In the 1970s and 1980s, important portfolios were held by Sabah and Sarawak leaders, like defence, which was once headed by a Sabahan, and education, once headed by a Sarawakian," Jayum added.

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