

Fahmi's task is get voters to taste PKR message

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By Terence Netto

'The Fairly Current Show' is the name of the online video programme Fahmi Fadzil was involved in five years ago, before he took the plunge into full-time politics as political secretary to Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar.

Au courant (well-informed) is what the new communications director of PKR will have to be when he takes over the position this week from Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, who assayed the role the last couple of years and will now assume portfolios in the youth wing of the party.

Whereas 'The Fairly Current Show' allowed Fahmi latitude in attracting budding talent in theatre to air their offbeat ideas, having to be au courant in a frontline post in the opposition party would necessarily impose limits on the freewheeling agility that was on evidence while he was running the online video programme.

NONE "I have to make sure that everyone stays on message," said Fahmi, a chemical engineer by training, in an interview with Malaysiakini before taking up his new position.

This is not going to be easy to bring off for a political party that was initially an assemblage of disaffected Umno and BN component party members, NGOs types - some secular and others religious in orientation - and social democrats from Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

There has not been such a motley bunch of searchers in the byways of Malayan justice since a collection of left-wing Malay groups and left-of-centre and centrist non-Malay parties banded together, as Putera-AMCJA, in Malaya shortly after the end of the Second World War to fight for independence from British colonial rule.

"I admit it's going to be a tough call to get everyone to stay on message," said Fahmi.

"But we have to exercise discipline for we have passed the formative stage of our evolution and are now in the more mature middle phase where our message of justice for all Malaysians as embodied in the state governments of Selangor, Penang and Kelantan, is conveyed to all who yearn for a better country," explained Fahmi.

Tenacious campaign

As major political parties go, PKR is relatively young, at 14 years of age, but it has in its ranks veteran campaigners on sundry issues of social equity and justice that have roiled the political waters in Malaysia over the past five decades at least.

Fahmi Fadzil at final Ceramah GE13 Lembah Pantai - 4 May 2013 Getting this spectrum of strivers to stay on the same page will be a feat of organisation but Fahmi, in five years of political stewardship for Nurul Izzah, has acquired hard-won experience in attracting and welding a diverse range of contributors to give of their *métier* in return only for the satisfaction of having done their mite for a more egalitarian Malaysia.

The task of getting Nurul re-elected as Lembah Pantai in the teeth of a tenacious campaign waged by a cabinet minister, Raja Nong Chik Zainal Abidin, with deep pockets placed the severest strains on the mettle of the incumbent MP's team.

Fahmi was the engaging and eclectic centre of this set-up, his experience in the theatrical arts affording him the equanimity and humour to take the rough with the smooth in stride.

In the sometimes maddening maelstrom to get Nurul re-elected against an Umno plutocrat ravenous for the scalp of a PKR blue whose defeat would facilitate his rise in the ruling party's hierarchy, Fahmi, neck-deep in the hub, had to forgo the possibility of a candidature at parliamentary or state level.

Fortunately, at 32 years of age, there is plenty of time yet for the chance to be an elected representative, a YB.

Rural-urban divide

But first, he has to get up to speed in the campaign to collate all aspects of the PKR media machinery so that the message is out that the party is the vehicle for the aspirations of all Malaysians who want a better country.

"We have to respond coherently to the issues of the day, monitor all sections of the media, get our media archives in order and address the rural-urban divide which is our biggest challenge," said Fahmi, in summarizing his portfolio of duties.

Fahmi Fadzil at Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat Just the other day, Fahmi happened to be at a news vendor near where he lives when he bumped into a retiree who was browsing a paper.

Obviously, an opposition sympathiser, the man said he had been back to his kampung bearing a mango for village folk who said the fruit's exterior was not very inviting.

"I sliced a piece and offered my friends to taste," said the man. "They found it tasty and I said it's like the Selangor government: good inside but Umno's propaganda says it's not. I said you have to taste and see."

The task of PKR's new communications director may be the same: to get the folks to believe that what they will get to taste is better than what they get to see.

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