

Harapan leaders shoot down proposal to gag leaders

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Pakatan Harapan leaders do not agree with suggestions that they stop airing their views in public unless the subject has been agreed on internally.

Most believed that political figures have a right to express an opinion, except when it comes to issues regarding their joint policy framework or airing dirty linen in public.

Previously, University Utara Malaysia's Political Research Institute (Mapan) director Kamarul Zaman Yusoff had **advised** Harapan and Bersatu leaders to distill their opinions through internal meetings to avoid making incongruent statements.

He said this after Bersatu chairperson Dr Mahathir Mohamad and PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail issued conflicting statements on whether the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) cash handout scheme constitutes corruption.

When contacted, DAP organising secretary Anthony Loke said Kamarul Zaman's suggestion was not practical.

"How does one impose a gag order on Mahathir? It doesn't work that way," he said.

Respect the agreement

However, he said internal issues, such as Harapan's choice for prime minister, should be discussed internally.

"But when it comes to opinions on policies and so on, I think some leeway should be given.

"We can't be rigid to the point where we cannot voice anything," he said.

Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) deputy president Salahuddin Ayub was also of the belief that opposition leaders have the right to express their views.

"We may have different views on things like BR1M, but it doesn't touch on the pillars of the agreement which is the **cooperative framework** for Harapan and our alliance with Bersatu.

"This is not a massive disaster to Harapan," he said, referring to differing opinions aired by Mahathir and Wan Azizah.

Seat allocations

He said what Harapan and Bersatu should avoid is dictating what their allies should do or reneging on their agreements.

“This is a good example on how democratic we are. But if any leaders touch on things we have agreed on, that should call for a special meeting,” he said.

Meanwhile, PKR vice-president Rafizi Ramli was of the opinion that a gag order would only symbolise a breakdown of understanding between coalition partners.

“There should be acceptance by different parties that every party has different objectives. But there is also common ground,” he said.

However, he said certain topics, such as seat allocations and candidate choices, should not be discussed in public.

Attempts to reach several Bersatu leaders for comments were unsuccessful.

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