

## **Toppling Umno – Dr M succeeded where others failed, reminds Shafie**

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Over the decades, numerous politicians, including PKR president Anwar Ibrahim, had tried in vain to dislodge Umno from the seat of power.

However, when Dr Mahathir Mohamad chose to come out of retirement and lead Pakatan Harapan in the last general election, Umno and BN fell.

In a media interview in Kuala Lumpur this morning, Warisan president Shafie Apdal (above) underscored the importance of the nonagenarian's role, especially with regard to the Malay electorate, for Harapan and its allies to recapture Putrajaya.

The Sabah chief minister explained this is the reason he is supporting Mahathir to be named as Harapan Plus' prime minister candidate.

"Because on the other side, you have a group of people who are too Malay-centric. You talk about Umno, PAS and Bersatu, while on our part, we are all multiracial.

"So, you cannot realise getting the support of the Malays (when facing the Malay-centric parties)," he said.

Shafie said while Malaysia is a multiracial nation, certain states are predominantly Malay such as Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Pahang.

According to him, the opposition must take cognisance of this when drawing up its plan to reclaim the federal government.

Shafie said it was Mahathir's influence which shifted the balance of power from Umno to Bersatu, which has since quit Harapan, in the marginal seats during the 14th general election in 2018.

"We have gone through history... When Semangat 46 tried to topple Umno and Mahathir (who was Umno president and prime minister at the time), more than half of the cabinet resigned at the time.

"Tengku Razaleigh (Hamzah), Musa Hitam, Abdullah (Ahmad) Badawi, Rais

Yatim... You name it. These were big players in politics then.

"(But) they were unable to topple Mahathir then. And the second round was Anwar, with the (reformasi) movement brought by PKR. Umno was still there.

"But when Mahathir made a move, in the last election, you can imagine some of the marginal seats, Malay areas like Kedah, Umno lost the state to Bersatu. They also lost Johor to Bersatu. Many states were lost to Bersatu," he said.

"Was it because of Anwar, was it because of Musa Hitam or Tengku Razaleigh? It was Mahathir.

"That is why. You look into the reasoning I have presented. (It is) not because I am sticking with Mahathir.

"But how can you win the next election and get the numbers from Bersatu, PKR or for that matter, from Umno's side if you were to put Anwar (as the prime minister candidate)?" he asked.

Only six months

On the same note, the Warisan president said he was not opposed to Anwar

taking over the leadership reins after Mahathir in six months as proposed before.

However, he stressed that the opposition must capitalise on Mahathir's influence to garner the required support first.

Furthermore, Shafie said if Mahathir and Anwar joined hands, the pair would present a powerful political alternative to PN, which comprises Umno and PAS as well.

"For a short period of time. Six months. That is what we have discussed. It is not to say we totally reject Anwar.

"Because you can imagine, if these two held hands and went to the ground. Not only in terms of Anwar's supporters, Mahathir's supporters. If he (Anwar) accepts for a short period of time for Mahathir to become (PM)...," he added.

Asked if he regarded Anwar as a stumbling block for Harapan and its allies to launch a counter-coup against PN, Shafie did not spell it out but pointed out that the tussle over the prime minister candidate is distracting their focus.

In the meantime, he said Harapan has been losing one state after another as well as its MPs to PN.

"We must be focused, we cannot be just fighting over who becomes (PM) candidate. I don't want to waste my time just naming who is the candidate when the election is coming.

"That (election) is more important. The people are not bothered who is going to be (PM). But we have to spell out to the people - 'where are you bringing us', and 'where is the way forward for this country'.

"This is important for us to win their hearts," he added.

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