

Dr M - Saddiq's youth 'party' won't succeed; Pejuang will be kingmaker

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Dr Mahathir Mohamad does not believe a multiracial youth party headed by his former protege Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman will be successful.

Meanwhile, the 95-year old aims for his new Malay-based party, Pejuang, to win 30 seats in the next general election and become kingmakers.

At a press conference in Putrajaya today, Mahathir said he did not know why Syed Saddiq wanted to form a youth party and did not find it a viable model.

"If you take away the youth (voters), that is a substantial number, but I don't think it will be very successful.

"In any constituency, there will be young and old voters. If he appeals only to young people, it is difficult for him to succeed," he said.

However, the former prime minister said he still had a good relationship with the

former youth and sports minister, and that Pejuang would work with the latter if Syed Saddiq's new party fought corruption.

Dubbed "Muda Malaysia" for now, Syed Saddiq is building a youth-led multiracial policy-driven political platform aimed at disrupting the political status quo.

This included dismantling money politics, usurping existing hierarchies, pushing youth concerns to the fore, and raising a generation of young political leaders.

As for his own party Pejuang, Mahathir said they aimed to secure 30 seats in the next general election.

"If we can get just 30 seats, we would be in a position to join either party (coalition). But in order for us to join, we must insist on certain conditions.

"Perhaps 30 seats will be enough for us, we are not going to form the government by itself, we are going to be the determinant as to who should be the government," he said.

Currently, he said, there are at least 18 MPs who are either in Pejuang or friendly to the party, especially in East Malaysia - a possible reference to Warisan.

Pejuang's inaugural electoral showing in the Slim by-election resulted in a major defeat, with BN retaining the seat with an increased 10,945 vote majority.

Mahathir said they expected to lose, but claimed Pejuang's share of the vote had been significantly reduced due to alleged vote-buying by BN.

He claimed that voters had revealed to him that money was exchanged when voters were being ferried by BN to polling stations.

"It is very cleverly done [...] inside the van, money was given. After they have crossed BN, they take a picture to show they have voted BN, and they are paid a balance.

"First time maybe they are paid RM100, after the show they voted BN, they get RM150," he claimed.

He said it was unlikely so many people were lying about this, but said the Election Commission was unlikely to take action unless there are confessions.

Meanwhile, despite setting itself as an independent party, Mahathir did not rule out forming an understanding with Pakatan Harapan when asked whether Pejuang would contest against PKR and Amanah.

"We can form an understanding so that we can win," he said.

The pro-tem Pejuang chairperson did not say whether his party will contest in the upcoming Sabah state election but said that several leaders will be campaigning for Warisan.

Mahathir also dismissed the notion that Pejuang was set-up so his son Mukhriz Mahathir - who is the party's pro-tem president - would become prime minister.

He said it was not fair for him to continue blocking his children from joining politics as during his first tenure as prime minister.

"My children are humans, citizens of this country. If they want to join politics, they will.

"Surely I can't say 'only when I'm dead you can (join politics)'. I'm 95 and don't have much time, but GE15 is coming soon," he said.

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