

Analysts: Mahathir's GTA in for bumpy ride, will only split Malay votes

Malaysiakini

07 August 2022

Haspaizi Zain

Once again in the driver's seat with his new Malay-Muslim vehicle, analysts have predicted that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad will face a bumpy ride in the 15th general election (GE15).

With zero seats won between the parties in recent elections, they said Mahathir's new Gerakan Tanah Air (GTA) coalition is unlikely to attract Malay votes in GE15.

However, they expected the four Malay-Muslim parties that form GTA - Mahathir's Pejuang, political veteran Ibrahim Ali's Parti Bumiputera Perkasa Malaysia (Putra), Barisan Jemaah Islamiyah Se-Malaysia (Berjasa), and Parti Perikatan India Muslim Nasional (Iman) - to further split the Malay-Muslim electorate that is now divided between BN, Perikatan Nasional (PN), and Pakatan Harapan parties.

Universiti Malaya Centre for Democracy and Elections (Umcedel) research fellow Awang Azman Awang Pawi said currently the Malay-Muslim votes still largely

revolve around BN, PAS, Amanah, and PKR.

“So for them (GTA) to gain votes in GE15, I think there will be no major impact.

“This is because they are small parties with not much influence, few members, and do not offer significant impact to get the Malay votes,” Awang Azman told Malaysiakini.

At the same time, he noted that a further split of the Malay-Muslim votes from BN or PN parties could then benefit Harapan if the opposition coalition’s voter base remains solid.

“Mahathir tries to regain political strength by attempting to get the support of other Malay-Muslim parties - Putra, Berjasa and Iman - as well as NGOs.

“I think that strength did not reach a high level,” said Awang Azman.

Mahathir had last week announced the formation of GTA as a new political movement with intentions to contest 120 of 222 parliamentary seats in GE15.

As GTA's chairperson, Mahathir intends to “crash” into Umno’s strongholds and contest in mostly Malay-majority seats.

“We only invite Malays but we’re not racists, it's only because our effort is to oppose a misguided Malay party, that is Umno.

“That is why we created a Malay party to go up against another Malay party,” Mahathir had said during the launch of GTA on Aug 4.

Commenting further, Awang Azman said it would be inaccurate in the current political context to assume that Malay voters will support a Malay party.

Right idea, wrong partners

Meanwhile, Universiti Teknologi Mara geostrategist Azmi Hassan echoed Awang Azman’s view that GTA will likely be a vote splitter with slim chances of surviving GE15, much less emerging as a winner.

He said while Mahathir had the right strategy in forming GTA, those chosen along for the ride will not help achieve victory against PAS and Umno as the two most dominant Malay-Muslim forces, previously united under the Muafakat Nasional pact.

“Mahathir is using that vacancy (after Muafakat’s split), but the problem is both PAS and Umno have a very strong influence among the Malay-Muslim voters.

“This is contrary to Pejuang, Iman, Berjasa, and even Putra, there is no guarantee of their strength to attract the votes,” he said.

“So it can be said that GTA had the right strategy, but the problem lies with the parties within it,” Azmi told Malaysiakini.

Within GTA, Berjasa last won in an election in 1990, while the other parties have lost all their deposits in every poll they’ve contested.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/631212>