

Harapan will do without Dr M – Saifuddin Nasution

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Pakatan Harapan is prepared to face the 15th general election (GE15) without Pejuang and its chairperson Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

When contacted, the Harapan secretary-general said his coalition respects the invitation from Mahathir to collaborate.

“We respect him as a partner whom we have experience fighting alongside. We understand the times when one is desperate to seek allies, and when it is easy to break promises.

“Yes, we share the same goal of defeating BN and Perikatan Nasional. However, Harapan will face GE15 as a Mahathir-free coalition.

“We pray for Mahathir’s good health, and if he chooses to contest, we wish him all the best,” Saifuddin (above) told Malaysiakini.

He said this when asked to comment on Mahathir's invitation to meet Harapan chairperson Anwar Ibrahim to explore the possibility of an electoral pact, to which Anwar had replied that he was open to a meeting.

Nevertheless, Saifuddin said Harapan's priority is to rally its component parties and further the electoral pacts with parties it has agreed to work with.

However, that cooperation is not extended to Mahathir or Pejuang.

"We had a relationship with Mahathir during the 2018 general election with good intentions and goals, which is to topple a kleptocratic government.

"As a result, Mahathir became the prime minister with support from PKR, DAP, and Amanah. At the time, all decisions were discussed collectively, but Mahathir resigned without any discussion.

"Mahathir's stance is very clear - that he never attempted to abide by what had been agreed. He knew about the conspiracy of betrayal from within, and he chose to violate the alliance," Saifuddin added.

Decades-old saga

Mahathir and Anwar have had a long history. Mahathir sacked Anwar from the government and Umno in 1998, and the former deputy prime minister was then charged in court.

In September 2016 - nearly 20 years on - Mahathir met Anwar at the Kuala Lumpur High Court, and that historic moment culminated in the alliance between Harapan and the Mahathir-led Bersatu.

With that political backdrop, Anwar and Mahathir reconciled as opposition parties geared up for the 14th general election.

The alliance of the two former nemeses helped bring Harapan victory in the 2018 election, but the reformist government lasted only 22 months.

Bersatu's betrayal as well as the defection by a group of PKR parliamentarians during the Sheraton Move in 2020 again strained relations between the duo.

Supporters of Anwar and Mahathir accuse one another of being responsible for the Harapan government's downfall.

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