

## **LETTER | Why not have three DPMs?**

**Malaysiakini**

**26 October 2022**

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LETTER | BN chief Ahmad Zahid Hamidi suggested that the coalition appoint three deputy prime ministers if it wins the 15th general election (GE15), each from Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia.

In response, Pakatan Harapan chief Anwar Ibrahim said that the proposal of a deputy prime minister from Sabah and Sarawak dated “way back during the Pakatan Rakyat era” which had proposed two deputy prime ministers, one representing Sabah and Sarawak.

The post of a deputy prime minister is not constitutionally provided. Article 43 of the Constitution provides for the appointment by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of, first, a prime minister and, second, of ministers on the advice of the prime minister.

If one is appointed a minister, Section 2(1) of the Ministerial Functions Act 1969 (Act 2) enables the Agong to (a) confer the minister with any functions or to be

charged with any responsibility in respect of a particular department or ministry and (b) assign a style and title to the minister.

The conferment and assignment are made by a notification vide an order published in the gazette. The order made by the Agong will also provide for the rights or liabilities held, enjoyed or incurred by any minister in connection with any functions conferred or charged – Section 2(2) of Act 2.

So a deputy prime minister is like any minister appointed by the Agong on the advice of the prime minister under Article 43(2)(b) of the Federal Constitution. He or she is not without power or is powerless or a mere figurehead in the cabinet.

A deputy prime minister's powers, functions and responsibilities are spelt out in an order made by the Agong and published in the gazette.

The last deputy prime minister was Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail whose appointment, together with that of the other ministers, was notified in the Ministers of the Federal Government Order 2019 in the exercise of the powers conferred to the Agong by Section 2 of Act 2.

By the order of the Agong, a deputy prime minister can be conferred and charged

with several functions and responsibilities of a number of ministries. Accordingly, there can be a first deputy prime minister cum home minister, a second deputy prime minister cum defence minister and a third deputy prime minister cum education minister.

The prime minister can be the finance minister as well.

This may do away with a large and bloated cabinet.

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