

Shadow cabinet: Possible PAS ministers
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last article in our five-part series on the Pakatan Rakyat shadow cabinet, we look at the smallest component party, PAS, which has 23 members of parliament. It will presumably will be given the fewest cabinet positions of the three parties precisely because it is the smallest one. We estimate it'll have between five to seven ministers.

The allocation within PAS is probably the least challenging amongst the three Pakatan parties because it does not have the unique problems that the other two parties have. It doesn't have a large number of incumbent MPs like DAP. Nor does it have to cope with the delicate ethnic balancing act that PKR has to contend with.

hadi awangAt the top of its leadership structure is PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang who recaptured the seat of Marang in the recent election, a seat which he had lost in 2004. It makes sense for him to be given the most senior cabinet position allocated to PAS.

The big challenge with Hadi is that his public image and demeanor – which has served him so well within PAS and among rural Malays in the northern states – are also the very things that make it difficult to assign a suitable senior cabinet post for him.

For example, his manner of dressing, with his flowing robes and Taliban-styled headgear, would probably not suit him (or Malaysia) well as the foreign minister or tourism minister. It's hard to imagine him as being suitable for any role which requires him to meet with international investors or be seen in an international setting. It simply sends the wrong impression of the country.

Based on his education or background, which is religious studies, it's also difficult to identify a cabinet position befitting his senior status. The non-Malays would probably be alarmed if he was made home minister or education minister and nothing in his background suggests he's suitable for finance or defence.

opposition boycott batu tamam election pc 110107 nasharuddinA PAS leader with a greater degree of flexibility when it comes to cabinet positions is PAS deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa (right), who defeated Awang Adek, former Tenaga chairman and Kelantan Menteri Besar designate (if BN had won) in the seat of Bachok. Nasharuddin will likely be allocated a relatively senior cabinet position. We could easily imagine him taking up the education, foreign or works portfolio.

The other PAS MPs who have senior leadership positions include PAS secretary-general Kamaruddin Jaafar (Tumpat), a three-term MP who switched from Umno to PAS in 1999 because of his close association with Anwar Ibrahim; Youth chief Salahuddin Ayub (Kubang Kerian), a two-term MP; information chief Mahfuz Omar (Pokok Sena), who won this seat in 1999 but lost it in 2004 because of changes in the boundaries of his constituency; treasurer Dr Hatta Ramli (Kuala Kerai), a dentist by training who almost won the parliamentary seat of Gombak in 1999 and was shifted to a more winnable seat in Kelantan this time around.

husam musa bangsar 080408 rightVice-president Husam Musa (right) and director of

elections operations Mustafa Ali are two non-MP but cabinet-quality leaders who could be made senators so that they can be given cabinet positions. Husam, who at one time was widely touted to take over Nik Aziz Nik Mat as the MB of Kelantan, has hinted that he is willing to take on a more prominent position at the federal level and wants to project a more moderate image of PAS.

If Pakatan does form the federal government, do not discount the possibility that Husam might give up his state exco position for a federal position. Mustafa, who lost a state seat in Terengganu in the recent election, is seen as a steady pair of hands, and would undoubtedly be an important asset to PAS at the federal level.

Two potential women MPs

titiwangsa contest 250208 lo lo mohd ghazali Finally, look for one of the two women PAS MPs to be allocated a cabinet position. Dr Siti Maria Mahmud (Kota Raja) and Dr Lo'Lo Mohamad Ghazali (Titiwangsa) (right) have important roles to play within PAS not just because they are female leaders in a party that has a poor public image when it comes to women's rights but also because they are MPs in relatively mixed constituencies. PAS would do well to promote its female MPs in order to present a more modern, mainstream and progressive image of the party.

It's worth highlighting that Pakatan in general does not have many female MPs and even fewer who are suited for cabinet positions. DAP has Chong Eng and PKR has Wan Azizah Wan Ismail. It would make sense for PAS to nominate one of its female MPs for at least a deputy minister position.

To recap, we think senior cabinet positions would go to Hadi and Nasharuddin. The next tier would be Kamaruddin, Salahuddin, Mahfuz and Hatta. We anticipate that either Husam or Mustafa might get cabinet positions via the senatorship route. And finally, one of the two female MPs might get a deputy minister position.

y4c nep forum 180107 dzulkefly ahmad Dark horses would be Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (head of the PAS research centre) (left) and Khalid Abdul Samad (brother of BN's Shahrir) both of whom have been working hard to build bridges with the non-Muslim community.

Both are first-term MPs and are thus very junior, but like Nasharuddin and Husam, they represent the future of the party because their moderate image makes them more suited as leaders capable of representing all Malaysians.

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