

Rais for No 1: Dr M raises the possibility
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Umno veteran Dr Rais Yatim is one of those leaders willing to make sacrifices in order to restore the party to its former glory, according to Dr Mahathir Mohamad.
MCPX

The former premier's stamp of approval for Rais came a day after Muhyiddin Yassin announced that he would not contest for the party president or deputy president but would instead defend his vice-president posts.

Mahathir, who had been Umno president for 22 years, lamented that the party cannot be nursed back to health as long as his successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was at the helm.

Based on Mahathir's diagnosis, the remedy for the present Malay feeling of insecurity is not a merger or some kind of cooperation between PAS and Umno.

It lies in restoring Umno to its previous strength, said the medical doctor-turned-politician in a posting on his blog.

"There are several leaders in Umno who are qualified to take over from him (Abdullah). Leaders who are not influenced by the greed of their families, leaders who are willing to make sacrifices in order to restore the pre-eminent position of Umno within the Barisan Nasional.

rais yatim "One of them could be Rais Yatim (left). Maybe in the end it would be (another Umno veteran) Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, with Rais as deputy," he said.

Both Razaleigh and Rais belonged to the camp which opposed Mahathir during the 1987 Umno leadership tussle. Rais was also a member of the now defunct Razaleigh-led splinter party Semangat 46.

However, the duo have since buried the hatchet with the former premier. Mahathir even appointed Rais to a cabinet position later.

After the March 8 polls, Abdullah appointed Rais - an Umno supreme council member - as foreign minister.

'Remove the leader responsible'

Mahathir also argued that there was nothing wrong with the current system.

"For 50 years, half a century, the system worked well. If it fails today it is not because it is wrong but because the leadership failed to make it work.

"The solution: Remove the leader responsible."

mahathir pc 260608 05 Meanwhile, the 82-year-old statesman described the latest development in Malaysian politics with regards to the possible Umno-PAS alliance as something strange.

"Suddenly there is a lot of talk about cooperation and even merger. Friendly and unfamiliar sounds are being heard from all sides.

"I wonder if it is a sudden concern about the need for Malay unity or the realisation that both parties have become very weak," he said.

Mahathir said although PAS won more seats in Parliament than before and now even controls Kedah, it was still the weakest party in the opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat.

"This cannot be what PAS aimed for when it decided to soft pedal its Islamic state ambition in order to work with DAP and PKR.

"PAS must want to replace Umno as the dominant party in Malaysia. But despite its success in the 2008 general election it is not even dominant in the opposition coalition," he added.

umno special briefing abdullah ahmad badawi announce resignation date 100708 05As for his handpicked successor, Mahathir said Abdullah must be irked by his failure to get a two-third majority in Parliament.

"It (the new government) is therefore unable to revise the amendments to the constitution made by previous BN governments or to introduce his own amendments to the constitution. In any case not getting the usual two-third majority is like losing almost.

"He knows he is regarded as a weak leader of a weak government. His coalition partners do not show much respect for him even though they themselves are weak. And the opposition openly declare they want him to go on leading simply because he is weak, a kind of backhanded compliment."

Anwar - the net gainer

To become strong, Mahathir said Abdullah might want to embrace PAS as a coalition partner because then he would have his two-third majority.

He said to achieve this, Abdullah would offer his sweeteners - "his usual solution to all problems."

"Maybe he would offer a second deputy prime minister to (PAS president) Abdul Hadi Awang and ministership to some other PAS leaders.

"But his coalition partners may not take kindly to this plan. MCA, Gerakan and MIC are not likely to welcome this move. Neither would Sabah Umno members and other coalition partners in Sabah and Sarawak," he added.

Mahathir said a BN government with PAS as a member would therefore be very shaky.

"Umno itself would be very shaky as not every Umno member would relish the idea of nice positions being given to their erstwhile rivals," he added.

He said such a coalition might give BN the two-third majority but it was not likely to please the electorate.

"The Malay voters may or may not welcome this unity bid but their concern is with the

leadership of Abdullah. They want him out. Participation by PAS in a BN still lead by Abdullah will not mean things would be any better.

"By associating with Abdullah, accepting the sweets and soft pedaling PAS' Islamic sate raison d'etre, PAS is likely to lose support," he added.

dr tan yew kee former mca klang wanita joins pkr anwar ibrahim event 030808 05Therefore, he pointed out, the net gainer might be PKR and Anwar Ibrahim.

"After all there is clear evidence that many voters picked PKR simply because they wanted to be rid of Abdullah," he said.

Mahathir said Malay unity was not a matter of Malay political parties embracing each other, the issue should be entrusted to politically uncommitted Malays.

"Neither Umno nor PAS have the credibility needed for this task," he stated.

"PAS has already laid down conditions. If Umno accepts these conditions it will lose its non-Malay partners. On the other hand if PAS gives up its stated views on hudud and qisas etc it will lose the support of its followers," he said.

Furthermore, he said even if a compromise was reached, it would result in a loss of faith and support by enough supporters of both parties to weaken them.

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