

**Shadow Cabinet - Do We Have One In Malaysia?**  
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By demanding the Opposition to form a Shadow Cabinet had at last removed any skepticism that there is a competing power to Putrajaya.

But this recognition is meaningless if barriers are put up at every single mile towards Putrajaya to thwart the Opposition from taking over.

Earlier, Khairy Jamaluddin and now Najib Tun Razak, both being educated in Britain should not have fallen into this fallacy of thought of demanding the Opposition to have a Shadow Cabinet.

They should have known better to call for such a scheme to be incorporated into the Opposition election menu without realising that the Malaysian Parliamentary system barely resemble to that of the Westminster model.

Not many will argue against the fact that it's resemblance slants more towards form than substance – hence what one might call a counterfeit Westminster model.

Then again, bearing in mind with this one very crucial feature for the existence of the Shadow Cabinet which either Khairy or Najib failed or do not want to bring up.

This feature allows the Opposition leader and his Shadow Cabinet to have meetings with Government Cabinet Secretary and other Government officials once the Parliament in Britain is dissolved. (1)

The Cabinet Secretary and its officials through these meetings will be alerted and familiarised with the new style of administering the country and the possibility of policy changes should there be a change in government after the General Election. (2)

This is the most unique feature the Opposition in Britain enjoys. This is done, so as to have a smooth transition of power if the government party loses in the General Election.

Will it happen here? Remember Najib's utterance of 'crushed bodies' and 'lives lost' is analogous to a impregnable wall built across the road leading to Putrajaya.

Apparently with the absence of this very crucial feature and couple with a host of many other additional elements like the independence of the Malaysian Election Commission and the media freedom had in fact made arguments towards having a Shadow Cabinet more of a philosophical estimation than a feasible one.

**The Shadow Cabinet (Front Bench)**

The CONVENTION of having a Shadow Cabinet in Britain is not new. All along from the beginning of the 19th Century toward its end, they were simply known as former Cabinet Ministers. Until the year 1880, the word 'former.' was replaced by 'shadow, and hence the Shadow Cabinet. (3)

## **Pakatan Rakyat's Parliamentary Committee**

In Britain, each political party had its own way of forming its Shadow Cabinet and as a result all these can be tagged into three groupings.

In the first group, the Conservative Shadow Cabinet ministers are chosen solely at the discretion its leader i.e., the Opposition Leader. He/she can sack or appoint anyone. (4)

But in the case of the Labour Party, it is the Parliamentary Labour Party's Standing orders which initiate an election of members of Shadow Cabinet. Here the Opposition leader's hands are tied. He/she cannot simply sack any Shadow Cabinet ministers as he/she wishes. (5)

And finally the Liberal Democrats approach in setting up a Shadow Cabinet differs to a large extent from the other two parties.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy Ashdown, who at the beginning of the 1945-5 Parliamentary session created eight Parliamentary Committees, most of which embraced more than one shadow portfolio. (6)

And this practice is akin to what Pakatan Rakyat is doing today with the formation of the Parliamentary Committee to shadow the government.

One can say that it is based loosely on Paddy Ashdown's experience.

At this moment, this is the best option for Pakatan Rakyat to have because of the trend towards Populism where popularity of issues are engaged with fervor.

Apparently being contained in this charged ominous atmosphere where race issues are played to the hilt by BN, it would be an advantage for Pakatan Rakyat to have a Parliamentary Committee to encounter this.

The reason for having a Parliamentary Committee is that it can encompass more members of different races from outside the Pakatan Rakyat to expand the intellectual pool so as to encounter racism with greater effect. Otherwise engrossing oneself to shadow a huge XXL BN Shadow Cabinet will be a futile and inconsequential undertaking.

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