

'We will remain an independent bloc'

Dr M and five MPs declare their stand with Warisan ahead of sitting

By **TARRENCE TAN**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Ahead of the highly anticipated Dewan Rakyat sitting on Monday, the group of six former Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia MPs, led by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has declared it will remain as an independent bloc together with Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan).

The joint statement by the six, which indicated that they were distancing themselves from Pakatan Harapan, also stated that they were sticking to their initial decision to back Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal as their candidate for premier and not PKR president

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

They argued that the Warisan president will not only be able to garner majority support but proposing him would also help improve relations between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysian states.

"For us, nominating Shafie as prime minister is a positive step that needs to be taken.

"We also decided to remain with Warisan as an independent bloc inside and outside of Parliament.

"We are not joining any coalition," they said.

The joint statement was signed by Dr Mahathir who is Langkawi MP, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir (Jerlun), Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul

Rahman (Muar), Dr Maszlee Malik (Simpang Renggam), Datuk Amiruddin Hamzah (Kubang Pasu) and Datuk Dr Shahrudin Md Salleh (Sri Gading).

Dr Mahathir in the statement said they decided on Shafie's candidacy following several meetings among them.

"Although the Pakatan presidential council has named Anwar as the prime minister candidate, it doesn't involve me and my friends from Bersatu, as well as Warisan," he said.

"We are still holding on to the suggestion made following a meeting between me and leaders from Warisan, Parti Amanah Negara and DAP on June 25," he said.

At the meeting, Dr Mahathir said Amanah and DAP had proposed Shafie's name as prime minister candidate, with Anwar and Mukhriz as his deputies.

He said they agreed to the proposal as they felt it was a solution to the impasse over Pakatan's choice for the top post.

"The June 25 meeting had asked me to make an announcement regarding Shafie's candidacy and I did it on June 27.

"After the announcement was made, DAP and Amanah did not hold on to the decision to nominate Shafie during a July 6 Pakatan presidential council meeting.

"Instead, Anwar was named as the candidate for prime minister,"

said Dr Mahathir.

On July 6, the Pakatan presidential council said it decided to commit to its earlier decision to nominate Anwar as their candidate for premier.

The six also said they would oppose the decision to replace Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof and would table a no-confidence motion against Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's leadership.

However, questions are being raised as to whether Dr Mahathir would succeed given that his bloc only has six MPs while Warisan has nine whereas PKR has 39 MPs, DAP has 42, and Amanah has 11 MPs.

The Star - 11/7/2020 pg. 6