

Will team Anwar-Rafizi flourish?

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PKR's new deputy president will be a completely different kind of political animal and there are concerns that his style may create a party within a party.

Analysis by JOCELINE TAN

DATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim is certainly making an effort to enable a smooth transition of the new leadership line-up in his party.

The PKR president met up with Rafizi Ramli and Nurul Izzah Anwar at a Japanese restaurant several days before the party's election results were officially endorsed.

He shared a photo of them on Instagram with the caption: "Chatted as well as discussed the agenda of strengthening Keadilan."

A generational shift has taken place in PKR and it was great optics ahead of the party congress next week.

It signalled that PKR's top two can work together and, as one PKR official pointed out with a laugh, "both of them need that picture".

Anwar's new deputy president is young enough to be his son and the signs are that Rafizi, 44, will be a very different kind of deputy president.

From the way Rafizi has outlined his opinions about the general election, it is clear that he returned to politics with a planned objective.

Ayuh Malaysia, his brainchild aimed at reaching out to fence-sitters, is likely to play a big role in these plans and the outfit has already held fund-raising dinners in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Baru.

Rafizi has wasted no time in getting the show on the road, injecting a dynamism that has been missing in Pakatan Harapan politics.

Ayuh Malaysia boils down to Rafizi thinking out of the box.

"He has launched his roadshow, he will raise funds, he has his own election blueprint and he will do it



Holding his own: Rafizi (right), Anwar's new deputy president, is wasting little time in getting his project, Ayuh Malaysia, off the ground.

his own way. Anwar is the boss but you can see that Rafizi will be his own boss. He is not going to be a yes-man," said former vice-president Tian Chua.

Many of his ideas and projects would face road bumps if he tried to do it in his party but he will be able to cut through the red tape by pushing it through Ayuh Malaysia.

The outfit will be able to strike out and take stands that are relatively independent of PKR or Pakatan.

"It is not going to be a smooth road, I foresee clashes between Anwar and Rafizi. But the thing is that anyone who wants to go far as a politician needs to work as a team," said Chua.

At one of Ayuh Malaysia's fund-raisers, newly-elected vice-president Chang Lih Kang criticised Pakatan's choice of prime minister in 2018, saying that the "wrong foreman" was hired to fix

the engine of a car that had long needed an overhaul.

"He had experience but he used old spare parts and methods. It was his way or the highway and no one could stand him, not even the car. Now we need someone to install a brand new engine. Who can do it?" said Chang, who is also the Tanjung Malim MP.

Meanwhile, the ripples from the party election have yet to smoothen out.

The e-voting system has been badly discredited. It failed to serve its purpose of providing instant results and there are likely to be calls at the congress to revert to the more reliable pen-and-paper voting system.

The most controversial outcome of the polls was the Wanita leadership contest where Rodziah Ismail, a Rafizi ally and Selangor exco member, had initially won by around 500 votes but ended up los-

ing to Fadhlina Sidek by 32 votes after a controversial forensic audit.

It sparked off a storm of comments in the party's chatgroups and Rafizi mocked the margin of win as the "smallest in the world for a key party in any country".

The weird thing is that both losers as well as winners are equally convinced that there had been tampering, hacking and manipulation in the polls.

"It's not about being a sore loser but there have still been so many questions about how the election was managed.

"It's about transparency and the loss of confidence will have repercussions for the party," said Hang Tuah Jaya MP Datuk Seri Shamsul Iskandar Md Akin.

This was quite evident in the terse exchanges between Rafizi and Anwar's former aide Farhash Wafa Salvador Rizal Mubarak, two men who have never been able to get along.

Rafizi seems convinced that the forensic audit was aimed at undermining his victory and, indeed, his winning majority was eventually reduced from 19,000 to around 16,000.

He alleged that the circle around Anwar was instigating him on the election results and asked members to ignore the noise from those who lost.

Farhash, who has been the most vocal about the polls discrepancies, accused Rafizi of being afraid of the truth coming out.

He has also questioned the integrity of the party's election committee and called for a probe into the forensic audit.

Whatever happens in the next

few years, the people who ran the PKR election should not be allowed anywhere near the country's Election Commission.

"The election is over, we need to close ranks and this is something which the top leadership has to sort out in a mature way," said Kota Anggerik assemblyman Najwan Halimi.

Najwan said that despite the simmering discontent, most members were anxious for the party to move on and focus on the general election.

"But moving on requires one side to extend the olive branch and the other side to accept it," said Shamsul Iskandar.

The concern now is whether there will be any kind of synergy between Rafizi and Anwar.

Will Rafizi go off on his own tangent with the Ayuh Malaysia movement?

Will it become a parallel party or what some say will be "a party within a party"?

Anwar had a headache dealing with his then deputy Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, who was ambitious and operated within a circle dubbed the "cartel". But Azmin was essentially an establishment man who did not try to change the rules of the game.

Rafizi will be much more difficult to handle. He is also ambitious and works with an exclusive group of trusted people that has been likened to "a cult".

But this is a man on a mission, he is terribly clever and he will be a completely different type of political animal.

The views expressed here are entirely the writer's own.