

Dr Mahathir's appointment as adviser to SG4 'purely cosmetic', say experts

KUALA LUMPUR: Appointing Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the adviser of the "state government four" — or SG4 — is cosmetic and may not bring much benefit to Perikatan Nasional-led states, said experts.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research senior fellow Dr Azmi Hassan said there was no "tangible reason" for PN to appoint the former prime minister as their unofficial governance and economic adviser.

"Dr Mahathir has a wide global network, but he is not the prime minister. Foreign direct investments will still need to go through the Malaysian Investment Development Authority.

"Even then, it is a strange move (by PN) as PN state governments are at odds with the federal government."

The geostrategist said the SG4 should have instead appointed an influential person who was neu-



(From left) Dr Azmi Hassan, Professor James Chin and Associate Professor Dr Awang Azman Awang Pawi

tral if it was sincere in spurring development in the four states controlled by PN, namely Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu.

"Communication with the federal government is very critical here, and that is why I feel this is just cosmetic."

Azmi said the move was also to prove that Pas was still the king-maker in PN and just a way for the

party to flex its muscles.

"Pas, as the state government in all PN-led states, is showing that they can call the shots because, as we know, PN chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Dr Mahathir are at loggerheads."

Professor James Chin of the University of Tasmania's Asia Institute had similar views, and said the only reason for PN appointing Dr Mahathir was to grow a bigger

Malay voter base for the 16th General Election.

"Dr Mahathir was a major factor in Pakatan Harapan winning the elections in 2018, and they (PN) think he can help them win."

Chin, however, noted that his role as adviser for the SG4 would not benefit the states in terms of investments.

"I don't think investors are looking at him kindly, as they are perplexed by his right-wing turn."

Despite this, he said, Dr Mahathir would remain relevant in the country's political scene.

Associate Professor Dr Awang Azman Awang Pawi said accepting the role was a way for Dr Mahathir to atone for neglecting Kelantan and Terengganu when he was in power.

The Universiti Malaya political analyst also questioned Pas' reason for appointing him, instead of a PN figure such as Muhyiddin.

"Does Pas think that Bersatu will not bring much of benefit to them in future, or do they feel that Dr Mahathir is more relevant than Muhyiddin?"

"This is perhaps why he agreed to be part of the SG4, because he wants to re-enter relevancy, to the point of being willing to be associated with Pas," he said.

On Thursday, Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar said PN was mulling to group four of its state governments as SG4 to focus on economic development and the people's wellbeing.

He said the respective menteris besar of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu would discuss an action plan, while Dr Mahathir was set to be their unofficial adviser.

Ahmad said the former premier would also help connect the four states with investors from countries he had good ties with,