

It's a Cabinet that can work, say experts

Reshuffle seen to boost stability, representation across parties

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PETALING JAYA: The biggest aim of the Cabinet reshuffle is to provide stability to the executive arm of the government, say political analysts.

Despite complaints that the Education Minister should be replaced, political analysts said the announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is still a positive one.

The reshuffle strengthens representation in terms of region, party and ethnicity, said political scientist Prof Wong Chin Huat of Sunway University.

"This is because Sabah gets two ministers - Datuk Seri Arthur Joseph Kurup (PBRS) as the Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister and Datuk Mustapha Sakmud (PKR) as Minister in charge of the Sabah and Sarawak Affairs portfolio under the Prime Minister's Department.

The state also gets two deputy ministers (PKR and GRS) to improve the standing of Pakatan Harapan and Barisan Nasional in Sabah and reward Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS).

The two deputy ministers from Sabah are Chinese, to appeal to the ethnic Chinese, as the GRS state government has only one Chinese state assemblyman.

"Umno gets to keep the Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti) with Datuk Seri Johari Ghani taking over from Tengku

Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz," said Wong.

He said that with the appointment of PKR's Datuk Seri R. Ramanan, Anwar has heeded the call for an Indian Tamil representative in the Cabinet, to strengthen PKR's Indian segment.

"DAP's portfolio swaps (Steven Sim to Entrepreneurship, Hannah Yeoh to Federal Territories and Liew Chin Tong to Finance) will also allow the party to better respond to grievances faced by Chinese voters.

"The promotion of young or dissident leaders in PKR (Adam Adli, Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir and Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh) may also help to boost the party's image. I would say the reshuffle is positive," said Wong.

He added that while some would want a new education minister or a new tourism minister, it all depends on how issues are handled.

He said crisis hurts not just because ministers are slow to respond but because there is perceived silence from the top leadership.

The public, he said, will remember that silence and the failed minister, not the Cabinet of 90% ministers who performed with flying colours.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's political science expert Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said the new Cabinet line-up is a response to grassroots' fatigue and anxiety.

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Halls of power: A file pic of the Parliament building in Kuala Lumpur, where the new Cabinet will meet.



"Anwar has made sure of a stable, politically balanced and coordinated Cabinet. The new line-up is a workable one. Anwar's main aim is to create a Cabinet which can function."

Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian

coordinated Cabinet," he said.

Sivamurugan said this is because the unity government is made up of three main coalitions and many parties that need to work together despite their differences.

"The new Cabinet line-up is a workable one. Anwar's main aim is to create a Cabinet which can function.

"Having said that, the credibility of the Cabinet now depends on quick delivery on cost of living,

economy and reforms within the next six months."

On Johari's appointment, Sivamurugan said it was not surprising as Miti has always been an Umno portfolio.

"Johari is a good choice as he is a safe bet, a steady politician and perceived as investor-friendly. He can be a big reformer but time is not on his side.

"This government only has two more years before it completes its tenure.

"As for Hannah Yeoh being put in charge of the Federal Territories, this may be politically risky as a ministry with two non-Malays at its helm may feed an optic problem.

"However, Yeoh can use her experience in the Youth and Sports Ministry to head the Federal Territories ministry."

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia political analyst Dr Mazlan Ali said there was no surprise or excitement in the reshuffle.

"Vacant ministries like Miti and the Economy Ministry have been filled with capable ministers like Johari and Akmal Nasrullah.

"With two non-Malays chosen to helm the Federal Territories Ministry with DAP and GRS, I foresee criticism from the public," said Mazlan.

He said this was due to Malay issues in Kuala Lumpur like the Kampung Bharu redevelopment and the proposed Urban Renewal Act.