

PKR goes into final huddle before polls
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 11 — PKR's retreat at the end of the month will be the party's largest ever as it seeks to streamline its election strategy before federal polls that must be called in the next 14 months.

The party, whose advisor, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) pact's prime ministerial candidate, will also finalise its post-election action plan which includes the possibility of Barisan Nasional (BN) declaring an emergency should the ruling coalition lose power.

The retreat, to be held in Lumut from February 24-26, will involve not just the party's top leadership but also division leaders from seats that the opposition party will be contesting in the 13th general elections (GE13).

"Usually it is only the supreme council and political bureau but with grassroots leaders, there will be about 200 people attending, the largest in the party's history," strategic director Rafizi Ramli told The Malaysian Insider.

He said that with the party now aiming to take over Putrajaya, it couldn't afford to enter polls without a clear and united front as it has done before.

A former deputy prime minister, Anwar led a loose alliance of PKR, DAP and PAS to record gains in the 2008 elections, with PKR becoming the largest opposition party in Parliament after winning 31 federal seats.

At that time, the three parties had yet to form a solid pact but managed to work together and deny the powerful BN coalition its customary two-thirds control in Parliament.

Together, PKR, DAP and PAS won a total of 82 federal seats and swept into power in five states, including wealthy Selangor and Penang.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has advised the PM to delay polls and win back more support for BN. — file pic

The opposition coalition now believes it is ready to form federal government but political observers note the parties have continued to be plagued by infighting.

The three parties have been called out for their failure to stand united over enforcing Islamic criminal law and lopsided affirmative action policies in a multi-religious, multicultural nation.

"We will break into smaller groups to fine-tune our party's stand on issues where in some areas it is difficult to sell to voters," Rafizi said, adding that Anwar will meet grassroots leaders to thrash out outstanding issues over candidates for the coming polls.

The central leadership will also communicate to the grassroots its plan of action "in each possible scenario following GE13."

“So we will finalise what we will do if we lose two-thirds; if the status quo remains; if we win; if we win two-thirds; if we win and BN declares an emergency. We will already know what is our response and plan of action,” Rafizi said.

He said that these ideas will then be communicated to PR partners ahead of federal polls which will be the first time BN’s uninterrupted rule since independence is under threat.

Despite speculation that Parliament will be dissolved in a matter of weeks, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has said “we still have to deliver on our promises and it’s important for people to have the feeling that the reforms we have promised will actually benefit them.”

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the government leader who served for 22 years and remains highly influential despite having retired, has advised Najib to delay polls and win back more support for BN.

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