

Shades of Mahathirism in new Cabinet will hamper reforms, say Pakatan leaders
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By Boo Su-Lyn

KUALA LUMPUR, May 16 — The appointment of Umno's old guard including former Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor shows the influence of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders said today

They said the remnants of Mahathirism will also likely hamper Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's reform plans.

"You don't see any intention of breaking away from the past," DAP strategist Liew Chin Tong (picture) told The Malaysian Insider today.

"The appointment of Shahidan furthers the Umno agenda... there is no intention to reform," added the Kluang MP.

Shahidan was appointed a minister in the Prime Minister's Department, while Tengku Adnan was awarded the Federal Territories minister post.

Umno took 18 ministerial positions in the 32-man Cabinet, most of whom were old government hands being switched around or promoted with the exception of new faces like Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin and Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) secretary Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan.

Candidates from Chinese-based BN parties MCA and Gerakan were not named for any Cabinet post, but sources have told The Malaysian Insider that Najib was reserving two seats for MCA leaders once the party completes its elections and reverses its stand to opt out of the government due to its poor election showing.

PKR strategy director Rafizi Ramli said the lack of government representation of the Chinese community would prevent reforms on issues that non-Malays considered important like corruption, race-based policies and education.

"Any open discussion with the aspirations of non-Malays would be seen by the Umno die-hards as an affront to Malay rights," the newly-elected Pandan MP said.

Dr Dzulkefly said the new Cabinet was dominated by Umno veterans. Najib said in 2011 that Bumiputera quotas needed to be eliminated eventually, but stressed that the government must continue to support the community's best talent to ensure a more competitive business environment.

He has pointed out that the New Economic Model (NEM) promotes affirmative action based more on meritocracy, saying: "We must promote the right Bumiputera."

Critics, however, have accused Najib of diluting his NEM by creating pro-Bumiputera agencies like Teraju and failing to focus on needs- and merit-based affirmative action policies.

Rafizi also pointed out that Najib did not campaign on reforms in Election 2013, but ran a

racial campaign instead.

“Umno’s only campaign in the last general election is predicated on race-mongering,” he said, adding that the BN lynchpin had tried to scare Malay voters by telling them that PR would trample on Malay rights if it won federal power.

Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, executive director of PAS’s research centre, told The Malaysian Insider that the “long shadow of Tun Mahathir” was cast over the new Cabinet.

“This Cabinet is Mahathir’s Cabinet,” said Dr Dzulkefly.

“He’s always stifled and confronted by the Malay agenda of Umno,” he added, referring to Najib.

Dr Dzulkefly noted that except for Khairy, who was focused on promoting Middle Malaysia, it was “business as usual” with Umno veterans dominating the Cabinet.

“This Cabinet is not exciting at all,” he said.

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