

Rafizi and Mohd Ariff - PR's weapons of maths destruction head to Parliament
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Kuala Lumpur, June 16, 2013 – With the economy in sharp focus for the next five years, the eyes are on Pakatan Rakyat's new team of data crunchers who are expected to give more snap and crackle to debates in the national Parliament.

Malaysia 13th Parliament will meet next week for the first time, on June 24.

Some new entries to the hallowed halls are Rafizi Ramli and Datuk Mohd Ariff Sabri Abdul Aziz, opposition brand names in their own right already. They are expected, like former e-biz whiz-turned-MP Tony Pua, to scrutinise government business and put inflated purchases under the microscope like never before.

Here's a closer look at the two new entries who are comfortable enough with numbers, like Pua, to comb the books:

Rafizi Ramli, PKR's "expose" man.

The Pakatan Rakyat MP for Pandan looks like an average office drone but his chubby-cheeked smiley facade hides the mind that felled a veteran Barisan Nasional minister. He sundered the political career of Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil with his "expose" on her family's luxury condo cow-farming habits.

His whistleblowing stunts have also cast much fear in the hearts of the Barisan and is likely to gain more momentum with Parliament's cloak of immunity for MPs.

When he announced his intention to run for office, he was slapped with charges of breaching banking laws for revealing data on the National Feedlot Centre's accounts. He was also hit with a defamation suit by Shahrizat. Both court cases are still on.

Born in Besut, Terengganu, the small-town boy who seemed doomed to a career as a fisherman, instead studied hard to earn a Petronas scholarship to read electrical and electrical engineering and master accountancy. This catapulted him years later into the office of the economic adviser to the country's richest state, Selangor.

Only 35, this former backroom boy in opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's camp has stepped into the spotlight as a giant slayer with two "exposes". He was the whistleblower for the RM250 million cattle-farming scandal linked to Shahrizat's family. He also put a spotlight on the government's multimillion ringgit rail extension contract with businessmen who enjoy rounds of golf with the Prime Minister.

"I've always been a finance guy," he told The Malaysian Insider in a recent interview, although he is a man who has worn many hats.

Rafizi said he is looking forward to his first-term in Parliament where he hopes to put his experience in the corporate world to the people's benefit.

"I started as an auditor in audit firms. I've been in corporate planning strategy. So I have quite an in-depth knowledge of the oil and gas industry, and I was in pharmaceuticals. I've

been in a large organisations and managed a large organisation, so I know how the dynamics of how large organisations work, what really private sectors want, how to grow a business.

"I was the finance head of International Upstream at Petronas Carigali for 7 years and Pharmaniaga as general manager for finance for a year. I was not just finance manager, I also ran the manufacturing plant.

"When I talk about workers, minimum wage, I went through that. In that sense, hopefully, I can bring a practical and real aspect to Parliament."

Datuk Mohd Ariff Sabri Abdul Aziz, DAP's deadly new "weapon".

Mohd Ariff SabriA former Umno information chief-turned DAP man, the Pahang-born Mohd Ariff who has been blogging under the moniker Sakmongkol AK47 is the DAP's new weapon in the Dewan Rakyat.

His online handle is inspired by his love for the Thai kickboxing sport better known in Malaysia as muay thai. Why Sakmongkol AK47? Sakmongkol was the name of one a top muay thai fighter. AK47 is the name of the Russian-made gun that has serviced many guerilla wars worldwide and continues to be a very reliable and hardy weapon.

No stranger to politics or lawmaking, Mohd Ariff was part of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's inner circle, having been Pulau Pemanis assemblyman for one term, from 2004 to 2008. The state constituency is also one of three under the greater Pekan federal seat.

Mohd Ariff read economics at University of Malaya and furthered his interest in the subject at the University of Manchester in the UK.

He will target the Federal Government's spending, which he has been doing for a time now in cyberspace, and which has helped garner a wider audience among the majority Malay community.

The Malaysian Insider was unable to reach him for comment for this article as the new Raub MP was occupied with checking in with his new constituents in the semi-urban federal seat before making his parliamentary debut.

But Mohd Ariff's inside knowledge of government as an aide to the Prime Minister adds a frisson to the upcoming debates. And it is rounded off by the complementary business and communications skills of Rafizi and Tony Pua.

All three know how to read the books and all three know how to pitch a clear message to a broad audience. "I'm sure it'll be a lively Parliament," said Pua to The Malaysian Insider in a recent interview.

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