

Why the haste in forming Pakatan Harapan when it has no plans, asks Maria
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By Amin Iskandar

Pakatan Harapan, launched more than a fortnight ago, is struggling with perception issues, leading a prominent activist to ask why the opposition parties had been so hasty to form the pact in the first place.

Maria Chin Abdullah said the new coalition was announced before the three component parties had come up with anything concrete to offer Malaysians as an alternative to Barisan Nasional (BN).

The Bersih 2.0 chairman said she was invited to speak at a meeting on a new opposition coalition more than two weeks ago, but told The Malaysian Insider she felt the three parties – PKR, DAP and Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) – had made up their minds on the pact even before the talk was over.

“I do question the process in which the decision was hastily made at the roundtable,” said Maria.

“Not many NGOs (non-governmental organisations) were invited and only some of us were given ‘speaking rights’.”

Pakatan Harapan was announced after the meeting on September 22 by opposition leader Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, as a new pact to replace Pakatan Rakyat which was dissolved in June following disputes between DAP and PAS.

PAS, one of the original members of Pakatan Rakyat, did not attend the meeting.

Dr Wan Azizah also said Pakatan Harapan had agreed that PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim would be prime minister should it wrest Putrajaya.

But beyond that, there seemed to be nothing else.

Maria said the meeting failed to discuss Pakatan Rakyat’s common policy framework and other manifestos unveiled ahead of the 13th general election in 2013.

At GE13, PR denied the ruling coalition its two-thirds majority for the second time in history.

“The meeting did not present a plan to resolve the national crisis which most of these politicians said that they would help resolve,” she said.

She said a plan was important as voters wanted to know how it would tackle the nation’s problems.

"There is presently a lack of leadership on who can individually or collectively state how they are going to deal with issues, such as racial politics, lack of direction in finding solutions to our ailing economy and poor delivery of public services and governance.

"This is all due to the federal government's direct interference with institutions tasked with specific jobs to clean up corruption, electoral reform."

Her particular concern was with the redelineation exercise, which she said, was to be carried out by an "incompetent Election Commission to ensure BN's survival rather than bring about clean and fair elections".

PKR secretary-general Rafizi Ramli (pic), however, has denied that Pakatan Harapan was formed hastily, or that the decision was made ahead of the September 22 meeting.

"It was a two-way process. The party leaders gave their views and listened to what the NGOs had to say.

"The NGOs, too, aired their views and listened to others who were present," the Pandan MP told The Malaysian Insider.

Rafizi said throughout the meeting, the majority view was that Pakatan Harapan needed to be formed immediately.

"Only one or two NGO leaders felt there was no urgent need for it to be formed, and that we should persuade PAS to join first.

"Four other NGO leaders said Pakatan Harapan must be launched quickly.

"The matter of a decision being made early on did not arise, and if some feel that way, it is only one or two people and I respect their views," he said.

Still, PKR has convened an emergency meeting for its leadership on Sunday to address internal disagreement over the way Pakatan Harapan was formed.

Despite the bumpy start, Maria agreed that the new coalition was still needed.

"At the end of the day, while there are glitches in the formation of Pakatan Harapan, it is still a necessary coalition.

"The litmus test now is for Pakatan Harapan to show its national plan and one way to do is to start a nationwide consultation to gather views and actions. It will show what democratic governance is." – October 5, 2015.

Source:

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