

Mahathir-Anwar team shows Malaysia at critical juncture, says US analyst

Free Malaysia Today

July 14, 2017

By Abdar Rahman Koya

While the two veteran politicians will pose the greatest challenge yet to the Najib administration, the coalition should not forget the younger leaders, says Bridget Welsh.

PETALING JAYA: Seasoned South East Asia observer Bridget Welsh has said the just-announced leadership line-up of Pakatan Harapan has actually resolved questions over the coalition's choice of a prime minister even if it had not been stated explicitly.

Welsh, a visiting professor of political science at John Cabot University in Rome, said the fact that the disparate political parties had reached a consensus on its leadership was itself an achievement, allowing them to "move from internal focus to engaging voters".

"The PM issue is resolved as best as it can and ultimately will be settled at the ballot box," Welsh told FMT.

She said the focus on the absence of a clear prime ministerial candidate had always posed a challenge to the opposition.

She said it was also why PAS's support for the now-defunct Pakatan Rakyat had been lacklustre in 2013.

After months of negotiations, top leaders from PKR, DAP, Amanah and PPBM yesterday announced that their coalition was ready to go to the polls under a single banner.

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad read out a two-page statement, announcing his former political rival Anwar Ibrahim as the de-facto leader, and himself as the chairman.

The line-up also named Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail of PKR as the president, assisted by three deputies, Muhyiddin Yassin (PPBM), Lim Guan Eng (DAP) and Mohamad Sabu (Amanah).

Others in the line-up include former Kedah menteri besar Mukhriz Mahathir, Sarawak DAP chief Chong Chieng Jen, Amanah deputy president Salahuddin Ayub, and former deputy minister Saifuddin Abdullah.

Welsh said the latest consensus showed that Malaysia was at a difficult period in its history.

“That two leaders can put aside personal differences speaks to the current challenges facing the country,” she said, referring to Mahathir and Anwar.

She also lauded the inclusion of younger leaders in the team, adding that their ideas and voices “will have to be incorporated if PH is to gain further traction”.

But Welsh said while the team was powered by two men who had helmed Malaysia in the past, posing the greatest challenge to Prime Minister Najib Razak, the line-up should have included more women.

Copyright (C) 2009-2016 MToday News Sdn. Bhd. All Rights Reserved.

Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/07/14/mahathir-anwar-team-shows-malaysia-at-critical-juncture-says-us-analyst/>