

It's unfortunate Pakatan needs Dr M, says analyst

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UKM's Faisal S Hazis says this has come about due to PH's heavy reliance on Anwar Ibrahim and lack of grooming of other strong leaders.

PETALING JAYA: A political analyst has advised Pakatan Harapan (PH) to quickly address the “vacuum” that exists within the coalition — the lack of a new, vibrant leader.

This follows a Bernama report quoting Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as saying that PH's move to field three names as their leaders could be compared with a ship with three captains.

“It will eventually sink due to conflicting directions,” he said.

On Friday, PH had named Anwar Ibrahim as its de facto leader, PPBM chairman Dr Mahathir Mohamad as its chairman, and PKR president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as its president.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia associate professor Faisal S Hazis said the reason PH had to field three leaders was because the opposition coalition had relied too heavily on Anwar Ibrahim and this had ultimately led to the opposition coalition having to also rely on former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a leader.

“The problem is that there is a vacuum now and because of that vacuum, they need Mahathir to be on board.

“Since Anwar Ibrahim is behind bars, he can't play an active role. This is not an ideal situation.

“When you rely too much on Anwar Ibrahim then you fail to groom new faces and new leaders in the party.

“It's not like PH doesn't have new, vibrant leaders. They have (PKR vice-president) Rafizi Ramli, (PKR vice-president) Nurul Izzah and they have leaders like (Selangor Menteri Besar) Azmin Ali.

“These people can easily be groomed to succeed Anwar Ibrahim and if they have a strong leader then they don't need Mahathir to lead the opposition,” he told FMT.

Faisal said it was “unfortunate” that the opposition had to rely on Mahathir, claiming it was the former prime minister who was the main reason behind the Reformasi Movement of 1998 as well as the Bersih rallies in the first place.

“Although he has turned over a new leaf in terms of his political positioning, it’s rather sad to see that for the opposition to move forward, they have to turn to this former authoritarian leader.”

He said, however, that this was the “reality” that PH needed to face and so this was the best arrangement for them.

“At the end of the day, if the structure can consolidate the opposition and they can focus on the real job – which is to fight Barisan Nasional (BN) – then by all means that should be the arrangement.”

He also claimed another reason they had to field Mahathir was because there was a need to bring PPBM on board.

“It’s also a compromise. PPBM’s role is quite specific: to pull some of the Umno supporters and voters into the opposition. So PH has to accommodate its leadership.”

Pakatan Harapan’s line-up also consists of PPBM president Muhyiddin Yassin as one of three deputy presidents and PPBM deputy president Mukhriz Mahathir as one of four vice-presidents.

Looking ahead

Faisal said one of the challenges PH had to focus on now was how to form a working relationship with PAS.

“Like it or not, ultimately, PAS is the biggest Malay opposition party.

“If PH wants to increase its fighting chances then it needs to ensure there are straight fights and in order to do that it needs to bring PAS on board.

“It could be a Pakatan Harapan-plus-one kind of arrangement.”

Recently, Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram) adviser Kua Kia Soong predicted that the majority of Malays would support PAS as opposed to Pakatan Harapan come the next general election (GE14), especially after it had named Mahathir as its chairman.

Kua, who was imprisoned without trial for 445 days after being detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in the infamous Operasi Lalang crackdown in 1987, said Pakatan Harapan had made a “mistake” in believing that Mahathir would be able to attract the Malay vote.

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