

Who will be prime minister if Pakatan Harapan wins GE14?

Free Malaysia Today

July 20, 2017

A report in The Straits Times says Dr Mahathir will be PM until the release from prison of Anwar, but it does not rule out possibility that Azmin or Muhyiddin could become the next prime minister.

KUALA LUMPUR: The likely scenario, should Pakatan Harapan win the 14th General Election, is that Dr Mahathir Mohamad becomes prime minister.

He will then work for the release from prison of Anwar Ibrahim and handover power to his former deputy prime minister-turned nemesis-turned compatriot.

That is the scenario painted by a report in The Straits Times (ST) of Singapore.

But no one has openly said that Dr Mahathir will be the prime minister if PH takes Putrajaya.

Quoting sources, the ST reported that the various factions across the disparate four-party PH coalition acknowledged behind closed doors that Dr Mahathir was their best choice.

PH leaders told the ST that as chairman of PH, Dr Mahathir could decide to throw his weight behind PPBM president Muhyiddin Yassin or PKR deputy president Azmin Ali, if the political situation warranted, to lead the country.

The report noted that Dr Mahathir had told a press conference last Friday that a new prime minister would seek Anwar's release and install him as the "eighth PM" should the opposition pact end Barisan Nasional's uninterrupted six-decade rule.

A PKR leader was quoted as saying: "Dr Mahathir wants Najib out at all cost. Not announcing himself as PM7 means he still holds a trump card to negotiate any future circumstance."

Sources told ST that DAP and Amanah fully back Dr Mahathir as the country's next prime minister. PKR is split between those who are amenable and those who insist on Anwar, which means that Anwar's wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, would likely take the post while seeking his release from jail over a sodomy charge.

However, the decision to name Dr Mahathir as the next prime minister, should PH win, has not been formalised as the PH foresees potential problems, including the government probe into forex losses by the central bank in the 1990s when Dr Mahathir was in power and Anwar was finance minister.

Parti Amanah Negara's strategy director Dzulkefly Ahmad told the ST, "We all know his influence but we don't even know if Mahathir is contesting yet".

The ST report said other candidates vying to be Malaysia's first prime minister outside of the dominant Umno had dim prospects now as the two heavyweights could revive a partnership that saw Malaysia enjoy an unprecedented decade of prosperity until Anwar's fall from grace.

The economy grew by an average of 9.35% a year between 1988 and 1997, during which modern icons such as the Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur International Airport were erected.

"Mahathir and Anwar represent a golden age. With Najib sinking so low amid his scandals, we have a groundswell for change," the ST quoted DAP political education director Liew Chin Tong as saying.

Liew was referring largely to the 1Malaysia Development Berhad controversy that has seen Najib being forced to fend off claims that about US\$700 million of public funds were deposited into his accounts.

The PH alliance is made up of Dr Mahathir's Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), Anwar's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Amanah, a group of rebels that splintered from Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) after the latter parted ways with its former opposition colleagues in 2015.

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Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/07/20/who-will-be-prime-minister-if-pakatan-harapan-wins-ge14/>