

## **Pakatan Harapan still 'gelling', says Guan Eng**

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**By Predeep Nambiar**

### **Stories about PH not being united are 'manufactured comments' by BN, says the DAP secretary-general.**

GEORGE TOWN: Have faith in Pakatan Harapan, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng told voters after claims of a “loose coalition” and the thorny issue of who should be prime minister.

Lim said PH remains supportive of Anwar Ibrahim as PM-designate but said more talks were needed to name someone as PM in the interim period.

“There are several suggestions for the interim period but we wholeheartedly agree with Anwar that the decision on the PM-ship has to be a consensual one,” Lim said at a press conference in Komtar today.

Reports say Anwar is scheduled to be released next year after serving three years out of the five-year sentence for sodomising his aide.

He will have to wait another five years after release before contesting again in elections to be made PM if PH sweeps to power.

Anwar’s family may also seek a royal pardon for him in the event PH takes over Putrajaya.

Lim said decisions on the matter of an interim PM cannot be made immediately as PH was still “meeting” regularly to exchange opinions.

He said the coalition was new and time was needed to “gel” together into a solid body before the coming elections.

Lim said the “gelling” must happen very soon as the next polls are likely to be held in October.

“If Najib calls for an election in October, we will not have time to gel. We need to continue meeting.

“We have some time until October, but time is running short. We plan on coming to an agreement on a wide array of things by then.

“It is part of the test that PH has to embrace, to show it is a strong alternative to BN.”

### **'Manufactured comments' eroding support for PH**

Lim said nasty comments were being manufactured to give a bad impression about PH, especially in BN-controlled media.

He said as the election season draws near, more were engaged in "manufacturing comments" to discredit the "gelling" process by the parties within PH.

"We are happy to report the adjustment process of all parties in PH is proceeding well.

"But our cohesiveness, which has been widely speculated on, remains speculation as we can tell you there is nothing wrong.

"Our new kid on the block, PPBM, is going through the adjustment process and this is going on well."

### **'Forceful opinions'**

Lim said talk about "an ongoing spat" within PH was not true and said "forceful opinions" passed among members may have been misunderstood.

He said PH encouraged the exchange of opinions among member parties as it was part of a healthy democratic process of any coalition.

"Some people give their opinions forcefully, but it is their right. We are just involved in the discussions.

"But you will see as discussions go, these things smoothen themselves out," Lim said.

### **Dr Mahathir factor**

Lim admitted having a former leader, like Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in the fold had caused some unease, but the general feedback on Mahathir was good.

"Having Dr Mahathir in opposition ceramahs was initially uncomfortable and as time has proven, all things take time to gel.

"But now, having Dr Mahathir in our ceramah or annual general meetings is natural. It is the adjustment process that is taking place."

Lim said the perception of Mahathir from the voters was "mixed", but many understood that he is in the opposition pact for a bigger reason.

"Even among various non-governmental organisations, they understand the Mahathir factor. We are not saying we forgive Dr Mahathir for his excesses.

“Most understand there is a bigger challenge before us, and just like what Dr Mahathir has pledged before, it is to save Malaysia.”

Lim said he understood the Mahathir factor was something “everyone would grapple with”, as the opposition fought him for many years.

“Don’t forget, Anwar was sacked as deputy PM and forced out of Umno.

“Dr Mahathir, on the other hand, chose to leave because he wanted to leave. He was leaving a party he lead and loved because saving Malaysia was a priority for him.

“And that reason is simple ... he said as PM he did not receive millions in donations in his personal bank accounts,” Lim said.

### **To buka puasa or not to**

In his first response to a group’s call to not partake in buka puasa functions, Lim said he was unflustered by their call.

He regarded these calls as “election grandstanding” which was also meant to undermine PH.

“It has been eight years; there has been no issue, until now. What is wrong with my government sponsoring or partaking in a buka puasa?

“This is all the work of extremists and chauvinist people who only want to play up issues before the election,” Lim said.

On calls by the same protesting groups to “follow” him wherever he goes for buka puasa, Lim said it was their right.

“Penang is a peaceful state, its people love peace. If they want to protest, it is their right, but they should protest peacefully,” he said.

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