

Win the people over with policies, governance first, opposition told

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By V Anbalagan

The decision on who will be prime minister should Pakatan Harapan win GE14 can come later, say lawyers.

PETALING JAYA: The opposition must first win “the hearts and minds” of the people by promoting good policies to develop Malaysia instead of being embroiled in a debate over who would be the prime minister, lawyers said.

They said Pakatan Harapan (PH) should also focus on grooming young leaders among its ranks instead of Dr Mahathir Mohamad or Anwar Ibrahim.

Lawyer Fahri Azzat said the opposition should make the people happy first by announcing good and sound policies to bring the country to greater heights again.

“Who is going to be their prime minister is too premature and is a distraction now,” he said, adding that governance would become important only if the people gave them the mandate after the 14th general election.

Fahri said only by outlining their programmes and policies could the opposition harbour any hope of winning at least 112 seats in the Dewan Rakyat to capture Putrajaya.

He said this in response to a report in the Nikkei Asian Review (NAR) that former prime minister Dr Mahathir was prepared to lead the government again but for a short while.

The chairman of PPBM, part of the PH opposition coalition, told top businessmen and opinion leaders in Tokyo yesterday that there was a possibility he might be prime minister again if the opposition won the next general election.

According to the report, his return to Putrajaya was on condition that there was no other candidate and everybody agreed to nominate him.

Dr Mahathir, 92, said his primary intention was to lead the opposition to victory, as he had “a lot of experience in winning elections”.

The longest serving prime minister – for 22 years – had led the Barisan Nasional to win five general elections, before resigning in October 2003.

Fahri said he shared the view of law professor Azmi Shahrom that the public spat by opposition leaders over who was going to be the prime minister sickened the voters.

Azmi had said that the open squabble was alienating an electorate hungry for change.

“You are in actuality hijacking the chance of victory despite having the advantage of opposing a deeply unpopular PM and government,” Azmi had said.

Lawyer M Manoharan said Dr Mahathir and jailed Anwar should be out of the leadership equation and instead young leaders should be considered.

He said among them were Selangor Menteri Besar Azmin Ali, PH secretary Saifuddin Abdullah, Amanah deputy president Salahuddin Ayob, and Perak Amanah deputy chief and former Perak Menteri Besar Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin.

“PH should not plan to have a stop gap prime minister if the people vote it into power. The government should immediately start working for the welfare of the people,” said the former Kota Alam Shah assemblyman and ex-Internal Security Act detainee.

He said there would be a lot of uncertainty if Anwar were to be made prime minister as the King had to first give him a full pardon and then an MP would have to vacate his/her seat for a by-election to be held.

“How sure are we that Anwar will command the confidence of the majority to become prime minister?” he asked.

said all moves to make Anwar lead the government would also paint the perception that the new administration was prepared to abuse the system of governance when the public was yearning for reform in the legislature, executive and judicial branches.

He said Dr Mahathir should not contest in the next election to become prime minister and instead could be appointed Senator and be made senior minister to share his experience and expertise in the Cabinet.

All said and done, he said, politics was a game of numbers and what happened after the election would depend on the number of seats each contesting party wins.

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