

DR M MAY CHANGE TUNE ON PAS SNUB, ANALYSTS PREDICT

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By MT Webmaster

(MMO) – Political expediency could prompt Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to back-pedal on his position about co-operating with PAS, observers said despite the former prime minister's persistent attacks against the Islamist party.

Noting that nothing is permanent in politics, analysts polled by Malay Mail Online believe it was unlikely that Dr Mahathir would refuse any chance to court PAS since the party's support is crucial to his "personal" campaign against Umno.

"Looking at the concept of strategy in politics nothing is permanent or predictable in politics," Samsu Adabi Mamat, political analyst with Universiti Teknologi Mara, told Malay Mail Online.

"As of now it appears as if a multi-cornered fight is inevitable since Mahathir have said that approaching PAS is a waste of time and that it is better to focus strengthening Pakatan Harapan.

"But all that may change once the election is near... we know that Mahathir is adamant to bring down Umno," he added.

Datuk Mohamad Abu Bakar, a political analyst with Universiti Malaya, echoed the view.

"As of now it may appear as if there is no possibility for PAS to work together with the (main) Opposition (pact) but things may change on the eve of elections," he told Malay Mail Online.

In an interview with Singapore's Sunday Times, Dr Mahathir had dismissed the need to bring PAS into a cohesive Opposition pact, claiming his Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) could even defeat the Islamist party in multi-cornered fights.

In remarks that could undermine PPBM president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's continued efforts to woo the Islamist party, the former prime minister also rejected the likelihood of an electoral pact that would include Pakatan Harapan parties and PAS.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that the electoral pact encompassing PKR, Amanah, DAP and his PPBM was sufficient to take on the ruling Barisan Nasional.

But Mohamad noted that PAS' position as the country's biggest Malay party after Umno meant it has the power to determine the success or failure of the Opposition.

And since Umno is also actively courting PAS, or at least trying to ensure the Islamist party remains detached from Pakatan Harapan, the latter wields significant influence over both sides.

"At the moment PAS is at liberty to join or reject them (Pakatan Harapan)," he said.

Dr Oh Ei Sun, former political aide to Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak, however, believed that PAS appears to be keener on co-operating with Umno than with its former allies.

Oh also believes that PAS would not change its position even if Dr Mahathir would make a last minute attempt to woo the Islamist party away from Umno.

"Irrespective of whatever Dr Mahathir says or does, the time for PAS to still be possible to work with the opposition has long passed.

"PAS is now more akin to a pseudo-ruling party, working hand in hand with Umno," Oh told Malay Mail Online.

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