

BE READY TO BATTLE MAHATHIR & CO IN BORNEO – BN PARTIES TOLD

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By MT Webmaster

Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN) should not underestimate and take lightly the gathering of smaller parties in Sarawak and Sabah under one umbrella under former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Deputy Chief Minister James Masing indeed rallied the state BN to be prepared to seriously fight the Mahathir-helmed opposition coalition in the next general election (GE14).

He cautioned the coalition under Mahathir can have political impact in Sabah and Sarawak if BN was not careful.

The Borneo Post reported that Masing believed that it was crucial for BN to first find out the reasons for the willingness of local political leaders to follow Mahathir's lead.

"If Mahathir could rope in all smaller parties under one political umbrella, there must be valid reasons or justification for them to follow Mahathir," said Masing, also Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) president.

"Find out the reasons. Once the reasons are identified, then BN is in a position to counter their argument and fight them in the coming general election.

"One must always remember that the winner of an election cannot be taken for granted before the last vote is counted. Similarly, BN should take the fight with Mahathir seriously."

Given Mahathir was BN and Umno chairman for 22 years, Masing said BN in the Borneo states cannot be complacent in fighting the opposition coalition in GE14 as the former premier surely knew the 'tricks of the trade'.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) senior lecturer Jeniri Amir however, thinks that despite Mahathir's glorious past, his idea of consolidating all local parties under one umbrella to fight the ruling BN coalition would not make any impact in the local political scene.

He explained that it was because there was a lack of a credible and influential leader, who could consolidate and get all the parties in Sarawak under one umbrella, adding that the small opposition parties were weak especially in facing a strong PBB.

Even if the local parties could be gathered under one umbrella, as Mahathir had suggested, Jeniri said he was skeptical about what those parties could achieve.

“PBB is just too influential and strong. I doubt they have the room to manoeuvre. I believe they will end up like Amanah and PAS in the last state election,” said Jeniri.

In the last state election, Amanah contested in 13 seats and PAS, 11.

Both parties lost in all the seats contested.

With former Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin now leading a new party – Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Pribumi) – and former Rural and Regional Minister Shafie Apdal soon to head a local party in Sabah, rumours abound that Mahathir and his cohorts had been making contact with some local political leaders in both Borneo states.

So far one politician had anonymously admitted that he had been contacted by Mahathir’s men.

But he has yet to make up his mind.

Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) Baru president Cobbold Lusoi questioned on how an opposition coalition comprising small parties can fight the ruling BN alliance, although in theory it was a good idea.

Claiming that no one from Mahathir’s side had contacted him, he said politicians in the Borneo states were unsure of real happenings in the Peninsular.

He said PBDS Baru would take part in GE14, aiming at Dayak-majority seats despite the undesirable results in the last state election.

In the May 7 state polls, PBDS Baru fielded five candidates – all of whom lost their deposits.

“We were defeated once, but it does not mean that we will be defeated forever,” stressed Cobbold.

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