

Latest exits show wheels coming off for PPBM, observers say

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 18 — Two high-profile resignations at Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia belies its professed ambition of challenging Umno, according to political observers.

Noting that the resignations were just the latest involving former Umno leaders who joined during PPBM's formation a year ago, Oh Ei Sun said the party has remained in a flux despite the general election being under a year away at most.

PPBM still lacked a foundation upon which to build and the exit of two founding members revealed that the party was never united from the beginning, he explained.

"It (PPBM) was never stable, with people coming in and out as it suits their political agenda of the moments," he told *Malay Mail Online* when contacted yesterday.

The senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore added that the party also lacked cohesion save for the façade put up by its top leaders.

PPBM co-founder and former Gopeng Wanita Umno chief Anina Saadudin along with Datuk Hamidah Osman announced their resignations on Saturday, joining another founding member, Datuk Khairuddin Abu Hassan, who departed earlier.

Universiti Sains Malaysia political analyst Sivamurugan Pandian said the two departures suggest that PPBM lacked the support to be a meaningful contender in the general election, especially after losing vital women leaders.

PPBM must also rebuild public trust in its capabilities and ideology, he said when noting that the party was now dependent on the cult of its senior leaders' personalities.

"The party is newly formed and they need more time to structure and position themselves. but then time might not be with them as GE is around the corner," he said.

Universiti Utara Malaysia associate professor Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani pointed out that with a similar structure to Umno, PPBM was likely reliant on its women's wing to carry out the necessary groundwork for the coming polls.

For Umno, the Wanita wing is the backbone of its election machinery and its thousands of members are vital in swaying opinions of households towards the Malay nationalist party.

Azizuddin noted that PPBM would have lost any remaining vestige of this with Anina and Hamidah's exit.

"They would lose especially in the war of perception. It would be difficult for them now, the woman machinery is no more.

"Any good perception the party among the women voters is now gone," he told *Malay Mail Online*.

Commenting on the party's viability for the next general election, the analysts believed the party lacked capability except at the very top, in the form of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Banking on Dr Mahathir alone to carry the party was also a risky proposition as he was a representation of the country's history rather than its future, they explained.

"He should not consider himself leader of the future. People want to see something new," UUM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Seri Mohamed Mustafa Ishak said.

He further suggested that the disagreements within PPBM were indicative of fundamental differences regarding its role in the Opposition, where it is allies with DAP, the party most often viewed as the current natural nemesis of Umno.

PPBM also failed to convince its members about its position on key issues, particularly those concerning the Malay-Bumiputera agenda that may not fully dovetail with those of its allies in Pakatan Harapan.

"The collaboration with DAP is one of the major issues. Not all party members agree. Ideology completely is going against DAP," Mustafa explained.

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