

Here's why Kedah will fall, says Harapan MPs
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The chances of Pakatan Harapan seizing Kedah from BN in the coming 14th general election (GE14) is 100 percent positive because of several major reasons, including the "Dr M factor", an MP from PKR argued.

Sungai Petani MP Johari Abdul said since the Menteri Besar crisis of 2016, where Mukhriz Mahathir was unceremoniously replaced by Ahmad Bashah Hanapiah, the northern state has not seen much improvement.

"People can see the change from someone better to one who is worse. Kedahans expected better results when BN gave them a new MB but it is obvious, in terms of academic status and work performance, that the current leader is not the right one," Johari told *Malaysiakini* in an interview at his office in Sungai Petani.

The PKR advisor said Kedahans are not adverse to change as they have experienced the situation in the past, like other Malaysians in Penang, Perak, Selangor, Kelantan and Terengganu.

"We have gone over the threshold and we can certainly do it again," Johari (*photo*) said with a smirk.

The other reason why Kedahans may opt for change is a national one, the rising cost of living and the financial strain of the goods and services tax, among other things, he said.

But the new factor which will spur Kedahans to reconsider a change in the state government, he added, is the return of one of the state's brilliant sons, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir is now the chairperson of Bersatu, a new Harapan ally, and the coalition has chosen him as its prime minister candidate, teaming up with PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as his deputy.

The former Kubang Pasu MP is eyeing several seats, including Langkawi, to contest in GE14, but is yet to announce his decision.

"Mahathir, though 93 years old, is an icon in his own right in Kedah, especially in the Malay heartlands, due to his 22 years of premiership (between 1982 and 2003)," Johari said.

"You can call him a dictator, tyrant, or whatever name, but in terms of development, he has produced tangible results. He delivered.

"The people can compare his leadership then with the present one (led by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak). For example, he built many highways and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport without imposing the GST on the people," Johari explained.

Mahathir has significant influence in Kedah, and such sentiments are somewhat helpful to Harapan, he said.

"There were some areas in Kedah where we (Harapan) could not penetrate before as they were hardcore Umno supporters. But with the presence of Mahathir, this task is now not impossible now.

"However, the challenge for Harapan now is how to capture 10 percent more of the Malay support in Kedah, so as to seize the state government," Johari said.

Fight those in power

Former PAS assemblyperson for Pengkalan Kundur, Pharolrazi Zawawi, concurred with Johari, saying Bersatu has made inroads into rural Kedah and can attract support from the kampung folk which DAP, PKR or even Amanah find difficult to achieve.

Bersatu's existence has put Harapan on the same standing with BN, as the ruling coalition is also now facing leadership problems, and loss of support from its hardcore members, Pharolrazi said.

"BN and Harapan used to have a 50-50 percent chance to win Kedah, but now that BN is split, many of its supporters will consider giving their votes to Bersatu or Harapan.

"Mahathir is certainly a factor here, as the people are still in awe of him. They remember how he lifted the state out of the backwaters," said the six-term assemblyperson who is now with Amanah.

"That is why we have hope and feel confident in this coming election battle, for the wave of change is bigger now with the conflict happening in BN."

Asked about the anger towards Mahathir for his past leadership style, which some deem "dictatorial", Pharolrazi said political decisions should be made based on the current scenario, not past history.

History, he said, is merely a guide. If one only makes decisions based on past events, "you may not be able to be friends with anyone".

He added: "Why fight with someone who has no power now? Mahathir does not have power now, so it is better we fight the oppressor who has power now, instead of fighting someone who has pensioned off, and with no power, as it would be a waste of energy to do."

Mahathir's influence

Meanwhile, another Harapan MP Mahfuz Omar (*photo*) shared similar sentiments with his comrades, saying his confidence that Kedah BN will fall is not based on emotions but on the ongoing political movement in the state since Mukhriz was "dethroned".

Mukhriz had massive support from the grassroots, Mahfuz claimed, as youths, including the children of PAS members, supported the former MB.

"I followed Mahathir into the hinterland after Bersatu joined Harapan and I saw longtime Umno members leaving their party to join him," Mahfuz said, when met in Alor Setar, the capital city of Kedah.

"Support for Mahathir is strong, even the Special Branch officers and civil servants tell me that there might be a change.

"They say, hopefully, let the change in Kedah happen at the same time (as) in Putrajaya," he said.

Mahfuz added that no matter how much Umno tries to poison his supporters' minds, the people would always remember the good doctor as the "Father of Modernisation".

He recalled how Mahathir had influenced the 2008 general election (GE12), which resulted in a big loss for then prime minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"Five states fell to the opposition then. Mahathir had not left Umno, nor formed a new party, he merely criticised Abdullah's poor leadership," Mahfuz said.

"Mahathir is now on an all-out mission to get rid of Najib. He left Umno, formed a new party along with several leaders, including former deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

"Can you imagine Mahathir's impact during the election now?" asked Mahfuz, a three-term MP who quit PAS on Jan 1. He will announce his new political allegiance on March 17.

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