

## **Crossovers to Bersatu: Anwar allays unease**

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**By Eddy Lok**

TORONTO, Feb 15 (Bernama) – PKR President Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today sought to allay unease and reassure Pakatan Harapan coalition partners and concerned Malaysian public that the series of defections from UMNO/Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs into Bersatu would not be allowed to hijack the declared reform agenda.

However, Anwar said Bersatu has every right to embrace and accept defectors from the previous ruling party as long as it does not contravene and go against Harapan's understanding and agreement for reforms.

According to Anwar, who is the leader of the biggest partner in Pakatan Harapan, Bersatu President and Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself had given the much needed assurance at Harapan meetings that he is committed to and would subscribe to the Pakatan policies and agenda as promised to the people.

Anwar who earlier gave a talk on Confronting Authoritarianism at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto, stressed that it is important the Pakatan Harapan coalition government, which came to power on public support, reassured the people of their commitment to reforms for a better Malaysia.

"What should I say? ... Well, the reform agenda would not be hijacked (despite the acceptance of the defectors from the previous ruling party and coalition). I think we owe it to the public who have supported us," he added.

As of the end of the last general election in May 2018, PKR has 47 MPs, Bersatu 13 prior to the defections, and DAP 42. A nationwide political tsunami then toppled the BN in which UMNO was the dominant party.

In an electoral understanding among Pakatan Harapan partners, Mahathir would serve for two years as Prime Minister and would hand over power to Anwar after two years.

On another issue of PKR party elections late last year, Anwar defended the appointment of Rafizi Ramli as a vice president, after he lost to Azmin Ali, Minister of Economic Affairs, for the deputy president post contest, saying Rafizi had contributed extensively in the general election.

"Nobody could deny the major role Rafizi had played and Azmin and I have both clearly stated we should be inclusive regardless.

"I did not appoint Rafizi as deputy president but as a vice president. Why (are people) condemning him just because he lost so he should be out completely? We don't run a democratic party like that," Anwar said.

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