

Anwar tosses aside Khairy's offer
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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has tossed aside the invitation from Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin for a debate, saying that the Rembau parliamentarian is far from qualified to face him.

"He wants to save the Premier Najib Razak. But the challenge is to Najib. We want the PM to answer as finance minister.

"This issue is a financial issue, not for a parliamentarian who is about to retire," said Anwar (right) in a press conference after chairing the Pakatan Rakyat leadership council meeting in Kuala Lumpur this evening.

Anwar, who is also Permatang Pauh MP, also insisted that Najib agree to a debate in order to allow the public to decide on the merits of the Pakatan 100-days plan, dubbed the 'Orange Book'.

"We have our arguments backed up by economic experts but Najib said that we are irresponsible and may lead to the nation into bankruptcy.

"He said we should let the rakyat judge. In order for the rakyat to judge, then the issue must be discussed in the open. This will allow us to state our case and BN and Umno to have their say," argued the opposition leader.

He added that the Pakatan leadership had agreed that he should continue to pursue a debate with the premier, agreeing to meet any conditions that the Najib may have for it to take place.

'Non issue'

Anwar also said that as far as the Pakatan leadership is concerned, the much talked about Christmas Eve dinner between PAS and Umno leaders at the Agung's invite was a non-issue.

"PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang has explained to me about it. I believe there is no issue nor anything suspicious as the party has pledged to stay committed to Pakatan.

"Before the meeting Hadi and PAS spiritual Advisor Nik Aziz Nik Mat had already spoken about the matter to me and I have conveyed their explanations to Ipoh Timur MP Lim Kit Siang and DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng," he said.

When quizzed by reporters about the statement by Johor PAS commissioner Mahfuz Mohamad that the party will implement 'hudud' law should Pakatan take over the state, the Islamic party's secretary-general Mustafa Ali who was also at the press conference, said that the former does not have the authority to make that call.

"I have read the newspapers on his statement and I shall check, but it is not his decision alone. Only the party leadership council can make the call and even then it must align with the Pakatan common agenda, so the matter does not arise," said the PAS leader.

Mustafa (right) also announced that PAS veep Salahuddin Ayob will lead the election machinery at the central level, to be supported on the ground by Johor elections director Dzulkefly Ahmad.

"We know Tenang is their stronghold. But change is in the air and we shall see," he said when asked about their chances.

Anwar also said that the Pakatan leadership has accepted PAS' choice of candidate for the Tenang by-election which Hadi will announce in Tenang on Jan 16.

He also announced that the opposition coalition will be holding a special convention to discuss economic issues in conjunction with economists and NGOs.

Mustafa denies report

Mustafa also denied news reports that Selangor PAS commissioner Hasan Ali was "warming up" to former Selangor Islamic Department head Khusrin Munawi as the state secretary.

"What he said and what was reported was not exactly the same, there were something added and differently worded. If you want to report, make sure it is correct," he said.

Mustafa was referring to Malaysiakini's report on Jan 12 in which Hasan was reporting cautioning the state government against launching a personal attack against Khusrin.

"This may not be fair and can cause problems with the 28,000 civil servants in the state... If they picket, we may be in trouble," said Hasan.

Hasan said this to Malaysiakini in private after the said press conference.

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