

Pakatan justifies acceptance of ex-BN Sabah MPs

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By Aidila Razak

Facing charges of hypocrisy over the anti-party hopping law mooted in Pakatan Rakyat-led Penang, the opposition coalition today defended its move to accept the defections of two Sabah MPs from the BN.

PKR vice-president Tian Chua said this was because the MPs move to support Pakatan was not an act which ridicules the people's mandate.

"(They said) they will not contest in the next election under the BN, which means the mandate is back to the people.

"If they made the right move to back Pakatan, they will win, and if not, they lose," Tian Chua (right) told reporters today.

Tuaran MP Wilfred Bumburing of the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) and Beaufort MP Lajim Ukin of Umno have quit their parties and openly declared support for Pakatan.

In terms of party-hopping, Tian Chua said, Pakatan's opposition to this stemmed not on defections per se, but on inducements that lead to the defections, such as the promise of cash or positions.

"This is very different from what happened lately, where these people said they were no longer confident in the BN and wanted to work with Pakatan," he added.

'Can't curtail acts of conscience'

He said that Pakatan is in the midst of discussing the different elements of an anti-hopping legislation, as "adopting it in a simplistic sense can be risky".

"Look at the (United Kingdom) UK when Labour MPs quit in protest of (then PM and Labour leader) Tony Blair's leadership in relation to the Iraq war.

"If an anti-hopping law was taken simplistically, these MPs would have had to resign, but people wanted them in parliament to fight Blair.

"A law cannot curtail an MP from acting on conscience. Any change to law to prevent party-hopping must preserve the people's mandate. We must look for the best mechanism," he said.