

Anwar steers PKR through as 'storm' fizzles out

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PKR CONGRESS With exchanges of rhetoric over the rationale of rallies to protest electoral fraud and the role of PKR in the Selangor state government days before, sparks were expected to fly at the 9th PKR Congress in Petaling Jaya, Selangor today.

NONEThe party's congress appear to be headed in that direction as Selangor information chief Shuhaimi Shafiei (left in photo) urged Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim (right in photo) to appoint party members into government-linked companies (GLC) and local government.

"I feel our axe is sharp enough to enter any GLCs and local council to cut down those that are not aligned to the party's policies," he said.

However, the tension fizzled out as Abdul Khalid took the stage and presented a seemingly sincere speech, acknowledging his stinginess and rigidity and promising to improve.

He also announced the creation of a political liaison bureau which would bridge the state government and the party as well as overseeing community programmes.

The move seems to be a compromise and an engagement of developmental politics where targeted development could translate into political support without the need to channel funds directly to the party.

However, PKR de facto leader Anwar put the nail in the coffin over proposals for party members to take up positions in GLCs, saying that this would turn them into Umno.

NONEPKR deputy president Azmin Ali (right in photo), a main critic of Abdul Khalid, also did not raise the matter much later, and instead clarified that the party was not out for contracts or the rakyat's money but merely wanted to see its party members trained in administration and leadership - culminating in the formation of the Centre for Reforms and Democracy.

As expected, the Election Commission was a prime target during today's congress but despite the rhetoric of electoral fraud, some leaders were mindful that the young party's weaknesses had in part contributed to their loss in the

recently-concluded general election.

Some leaders eye GE14

Both Azmin and PKR Wanita chief Zuraida Kamaruddin made no mention of the Black 505 rallies, as they urged a strengthening of the party's machinery, saying that PKR should not be a party of the general election where it only becomes active once every election.

"The fact is that the 13th general election showed that DAP won 38 parliamentary seats and 95 state seats, PAS won 21 parliamentary seats and 85 state seats while PKR only won 30 parliamentary seats and 49 state seats, our achievement is low compared to our allies," said Zuraida.

"The 14th general election will not be in five years time... Trust me, in the nearest time, like it or not, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak will need to face the people of Malaysia again and therefore we must prepare from now on," Azmin said.

Azmin had before the congress questioned the series of rallies to protest electoral fraud, instead urging the party to look into reforms.

However, his boss, party president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail appear determined to press on with the mass dissent agenda, stating: "We can talk about strengthening the party, but that is the basics and it goes without saying, but we have to continue the momentum for change.

"This is our country, we are Malaysians and we need to do something," she said.

'GE13's fraud first, GE14 later'

Anwar was even more resolute in steering the party to protest the alleged electoral fraud, stating: "We want to solve the 13th general election first, not the 14th, this one first".

He said he would personally lodge a police report over the indelible ink that was not delible used during the general election and urged party members to do the same.

NONEWhile acknowledging that there were instances where a party loses the popular vote but wins the election, Anwar said nowhere in the world had there been a case where the loss was so drastic - in this case BN's 47 percent to Pakatan's 51 percent - but yet won the election.

He pointed out even when such a scenario happened in the 2000 US presidential election, George W Bush garnered 47.9 percent compared to Al Gore's 48.4 percent of the popular vote, which was only a difference of half a percent.

After his lengthy speech in making the case for protest, delegates appeared to adjourn and accompany Anwar to another Blackout 505 rally a stone's throw away scheduled for that night, as Azmin, too, fell in line and announced that he would be participating in the rally.

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