

Penang speaker to stay out of PKR polls

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By Susan Loone

Penang legislative assembly speaker Law Choo Kiang has decided not to contest in the coming PKR election or accept any post offered by the party.

"This is to ensure that I am seen as bipartisan when carrying out my tasks as speaker," he told Malaysiakini.

NONE Law (on the left) said he does not plan to resign from the party, but will not defend the Batu Kawan division chief's post.

In the Westminster system, the speaker of Parliament resigns from his party and relinquishes all party posts.

Law's decision reflects Pakatan Rakyat's reason for nominating former Federal Court judge Abdul Kadir Sulaiman as Dewan Rakyat speaker.

Law further cited "time factor" as having influenced his decision against holding any party post.

"I have been a two-term assembly person with party posts, so it is quite enough. Also, without the posts, I would have less of a political burden as I would not have to continue contesting (for such posts)," he said.

"I am not saying that I want to retire from politics. I am willing to reconsider my decision according to party directives because whether to contest or not depends on the leadership."

Unlike younger leaders who want to get ahead in their political career, Law said he is "tired of party politics".

But he denied that he is abandoning the party after securing the speaker's post, after having served as a state executive councillor.

"On the contrary, I appreciate the struggles of the party and the opportunity to work as a state exco from 2008 to April this year," he said.

"I wish to set a good example during my tenure as speaker. Perhaps it is not perfect but we are taking the first step to echo what was proposed (by Pakatan at)

Parliament (level) - that the speaker should be someone independent."

'Better process in the House'

On the suspension of Question Time for the sitting from July 2-5, Law described this as a "regrettable beginning".

He declined to criticise the situation, saying it had happened during a "transition period" when he was taking over from Abdul Halim Hussein as speaker.

NONE "It was (decided by the time) I took up the post. But I will take steps to make sure the proceedings run smoothly and that all assemblypersons, from both sides, are allowed to speak as much as they want," he said.

State Opposition Leader Jahara Hamid (left) had condemned the suspension as a "death sentence on democracy in Penang".

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng later apologised for not having looked into this thoroughly, having relied on recommendations by the House secretary and legal adviser.

Jahara accepted the apology.

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