Is factionalism dragging PKR down the gutter?
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ANALYSIS For those watching developments in PKR, the myth of Istana Bukit Segambut is a simple story which encapsulates frustrations within the party.

In this myth, PKR is the kingdom belonging to Anwar Ibrahim, who rules alongside his wife and party president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and is warming the throne for his chosen successor 'Puteri Reformasi' Nurul Izzah Anwar.

This myth depicting longstanding grouses over 'PKR feudalism' was revisited last Thursday against the backdrop of news that Nurul Izzah had filed papers to dissolve her 10-year marriage.

"I don't care who marries whom, who has a scandal with whom and why they were unfaithful. That is not my business.

"I have heard of this divorce issue awhile ago, and it is said that there is a third party. I don't care about that. You live your life...

"As a PKR member I have one ambition, that is for the myth of Istana Bukit Segambut to be demolished.

"For PKR's survival it has to stop concentrating power and get out of the Bukit Segambut myth.

"This party cannot be like the Nehru family," Anwar's former aide Eekmal Ahmad wrote in a series of controversial tweets.

Such a direct response to Nurul Izzah's personal crisis sparked scathing online debate among PKR operatives, with the tweets slammed by opposing members as unreasonable loyalty to deputy president Azmin Ali at Anwar and his family's expense.

The bigger picture

Events leading to the Nurul Izzah divorce bombshell paint a bigger picture which could reach a climax at the April party elections.

Party insiders say machinations kicked off with the Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) debacle, marking that the feud between him and Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim is far from over.

Those aligned with Azmin (right) are quick to say that he was victimised by the "tryannical" MB, but Khalid backers believe it was a plot by Azmin's camp to smear Khalid.

This was followed by misinformation fed to Sin Chew Daily that for two days published false news diminishing the MB's position, and the Chinese daily was ultimately forced to apologise.

PKR secretary general Saifuddin Nasution called a press conference to set the record straight, but this was quickly eclipsed by the explosive news of Nurul Izzah's divorce petition.

The manner in which the divorce petition news broke in a speculative, unverified piece on Star Online soon followed by another report containing salacious content in fz.com, raises suspicions of another 'mercenary media leak'.

"I question the timing of it all. I believe this is to rattle those aligned to Khalid," an insider aligned to Nurul Izzah said.

One member of the inner circle, who spoke on condition of anonymity to maintain his "neutral position" said that although fingers point to Azmin, it is unlikely that he is the one pulling the strings.

"But it could be one of his boys, who is taking advantage of the situation," he said.

Common enemies

It is understood that when party circles got wind of Nurul Izzah's marital issues, Azmin sat his closest supporters down and warned them not to leak this out.

"He said that if anyone of us leaks it, we would be dead. This would affect Anwar and our duty is to protect Anwar," a party member who was present at the meeting told Malaysiakini.

Although outsiders may see the PKR feud simply as an Azmin vs Khalid issue, insiders say not all who are against Khalid are Azmin loyalists.

Some are professionals who are frustrated with Khalid's 'my way or the highway'

administrative approach, while others are left-leaning members who are ideologically opposed to nepotism.

There is tremendous frustration within the party over Khalid's "tyranny" but the same quarters also find Azmin's "blind ambition" to oust Khalid problematic.

Khalid, who once orchestrated the Guthrie dawn raid, is also not the benign and bumbling political player he is made out to be.

Party insiders note that Azmin supporters are deliberately blocked from state political appointments while the declassification of exco papers in the PKNS debacle shows Khalid was not completely innocent in the matter.

Ego war rages on

Khalid deliberately ignored PKNS' request for a decision on Azmin's directorship and dragged it to an exco meeting for even further indecision.

The party was not consulted when Khalid decided to cooperate with the federal government on the water takeover issue, leaving party campaigners no choice but to eat their own words.

Key players on the other side are the likes of Khalid and his former political secretary and now Menteri Besar Incorporated CEO Faekah Husin. Faekah served Wan Azizah as an aide for many years and is loyal to the purported Istana.

"What is happening now is that people are aligning themselves in the Azmin-Khalid feud because of common causes.

“We did not struggle so long to have a minister who acts like Umno. He is clean but does not listen to other people's views. Selangor can be so much better.

“This doesn't mean we support Azmin. He has a right to ambition but this naked ambition is complicating the matter,” an insider privy to the ongoing manoeuvres of all factions said.

“It is now an ego war with the rest cringing at the side, and neither of them are listening to the party.

"It reflects badly on Anwar as it seems that no one is heeding what he says,” he said.

The battle royale will take place in the April polls where Khalid is expected to go big and challenge Azmin for number two.

Till then, PKR movers and shakers will be chanting this mantra: 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'.

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