

Anwar must take charge of Selangor to cure its ills

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COMMENT Only about a week ago, political commentators were lashing out at the PKR leadership for the political squabble taking place in Selangor among party leaders.

The spat between Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim and PKR deputy president Azmin Ali even on a petty issue such as the PKNS directorship, was clearly undermining the ability of PKR to rule the state effectively for the next five years.

The unpleasant exchange of words between PKR leaders aligned to both camps and their subsequent political moves also irked other leaders of Pakatan who consider Selangor their most important political bastion, to showcase Pakatan's ruling and leadership capabilities.

With PKR's image in Selangor getting battered and shattered, Anwar Ibrahim once again turned the tables, overshadowing the political rivalry between Khalid (left) and Azmin.

Yesterday, Anwar was announced as the candidate for the Kajang state seat, which fell vacant following the resignation of its assemblyperson Lee Chin Cheh.

If he wins the seat, whether or not Anwar will become the MB of Selangor is another matter.

But by positioning himself as a state assemblyperson he has sent a clear signal to Selangor PKR leaders that henceforth it is going to be him who will be in firm control of the state.

He has killed the political debate on who will be the next MB which was raging in PKR, affecting the party's image and causing clear divisions among the party's rank and file.

Anwar's aim is to keep Selangor as the frontline state for Pakatan.

'Perak-style' coup d'état

At the height of the Khalid-Azmin political fight there was also speculation that

Umno is orchestrating a 'Perak-style' coup d'état by pulling Azmin and his supporters to their side.

Even if such a move was contemplated, it would be a tall order for Umno as with only 12 seats in BN's hands, it would need another 16 seats to just break-even.

Selangor has a total of 56 seats and only 14 seats are held by PKR representatives while PAS holds 14 and DAP, 15.

Under the circumstances it is impossible for such speculation to be realised.

However, it is quite clear that Anwar is positioning himself in Selangor to quell such speculation and to ensure that the state is always kept as a frontline state for Pakatan.

As the parliamentary opposition leader, he has a much bigger role to play in national politics and it is unlikely that he is coming into the state just to become the MB.

The tussle between Khalid and Azmin (right) if allowed to continue, would have caused colossal damage in the long run.

The rivalry between both the leaders had escalated to the extent that Selangor PKR divisions were bracing for shadow fights between supporters of Khalid and Azmin.

Former MP of Kapar S Manickavasagam, known to be a supporter of Azmin, openly declared that he will challenge Khalid for the Kuala Selangor PKR division chairperson post.

Even, Dr Xavier Jayakumar, who served as the exco member under Khalid from 2008 to 2013, called for a change in the Selangor state leadership.

Animosity and rivalry

With such animosity and rivalry plaguing PKR and with Khalid putting his foot down, saying he would not give up the MB's post in favour of Azmin, Anwar was left with no choice but to take over the leadership of Selangor to put the party in the right perspective.

With Pakatan led by DAP firmly entrenched in Penang, PKR had to ensure that Selangor is well-run and politically contained so as not to allow Umno and BN any further gains in the state.

For Umno, not having the state of Selangor in their stable is a big loss as they have lost much of their political and financial clout since Selangor was taken over by Pakatan in 2008.

On the part of PKR and Pakatan, Anwar's entry into Selangor is a good move and beneficial to them as from now onwards the state will have a clear leadership hierarchy and the political bickering within Selangor PKR would come to an end.

Anwar (right) himself, in yesterday's press conference announced that he may not become the next MB although he is contesting for the Kajang state seat.

Judging from his statement there is a possibility that he may allow Khalid to continue as the MB for some time.

Even if that happens, Selangor PKR leaders opposed to Khalid would not be resentful as the succession line is clear with Anwar ready to take over as MB any time as a state assemblyperson.

If Anwar becomes the next MB, Azmin is expected to become the deputy menteri besar or alternatively he may play a bigger role in the state administration without such a position, given Anwar's hectic schedule as MP of Permatang Pauh and parliamentary opposition leader.

As for now, in the coming weeks, all eyes would be on Kajang to see whether Anwar would be able to retain the seat for PKR with a bigger majority.

The burden would be on Anwar to do this to prove that his latest political move is well received by the people of Selangor.

Going by BN's political formula, Anwar would be challenged by a candidate from MCA.

As for MCA, it would be an acid test for the newly elected president Liow Tiong Lai to show that the party's performance has improved since he took over leadership.

