

## **Kajang by-election raises questions on integrity**

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To all new truths, or renovation of old truths, it must be as in the Ark between the destroyed and the about-to-be-renovated world. The raven must be sent out before the dove, and ominously controversy must precede peace and the olive wreath.- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

COMMENT The storms have hit Selangor, the richest and most developed state in Malaysia, and the jewel in the crown of Malaysia's opposition.

In the last few weeks, Selangor has made the headlines, primarily on the tussles between Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim of PKR and his party's deputy president Azmin Ali, who is also a close ally of PKR de facto leader and Malaysia's Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

The ability of Khalid (right) to lead Pakatan's jewel for a second time has again come under the microscope. Khalid was a corporate captain and had never been in the realm of politics.

He strived for a clean government and filled up the coffers of the state. But clean administrative measures did not translate into a clean physical environment in many parts of Selangor.

While Selangor's revenues grew, its citizens had to bear the stench of rotten, uncollected garbage, stinking drains and to drive through pothole filled roads. Piling garbage and rats running in restaurants are not signs of a clean government.

Ravens and crows feed on garbage and you see them in the major districts of Selangor, such as Klang, Subang Jaya and Petaling Jaya. In Egyptian, Chinese and Greek legends, the raven is a messenger of storms.

A political storm is indeed breaking

The political strategy of calling for a by-election in the state constituency of Kajang to resolve the crises plaguing Selangor raises questions on the levels of transparency and integrity in the political process.

Politicians may argue that the best strategies are negotiated in secrecy. But what

should be the level of transparency within the Pakatan Rakyat coalition in the development of a strategy that forces a by-election involving a top leader like Anwar to resolve the Khalid-Azmin conflict?

The answer is the highest possible levels of transparency and integrity, so that we do not have coalition leaders like Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng (left) openly stating that he did not know the conflict resolution strategy for the Selangor crisis is a by-election in Kajang with Anwar Ibrahim as the Pakatan Rakyat candidate.

The Kajang by-election, through a PKR-orchestrated resignation of an elected representative and without prior consultations with the other coalition partners – DAP and PAS – as reported in the media, strengthens the perception that the ruling coalition in Selangor is fragile.

This begs the question: can a fragile coalition weather a storm to be stirred up by the Kajang by-election, conceived by PKR without its partners in politics and government?

Perception of lack of transparency

But then again, is everybody in the coalition speaking the truth, or is it part of a strategy to create a storm to divert attention from something the public is not privy to?

Shouldn't Anwar, as the opposition leader, focus his energies and attention on placating the "extraordinary tensions building up in the nation" that another opposition leader, Lim Kit Siang (left), is worried about, just as many Malaysians are?

When Pakatan was able to retain the states of Kelantan, Penang and Selangor and won the popular vote in the 13th general election, Malaysians rejoiced on the high possibility of a two-party system for the country.

The perception that there is a lack of transparency within the Pakatan Rakyat coalition in relation to the Kajang by-election dampens the hope for a Malaysia with a two-party system.

Thomas Jefferson said, "When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself as public property." If our elected men and women adhere to this principle, we will see more ethical political leadership in this country.

The end of a storm is always beautiful, with a rainbow in the sky and the air

smelling fresh. The ravens disappear and the doves fly across Selangor.

An optimistic Kajang electorate may return the only clean government they have known.

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