

Anwar: Selangor politics too much for Khalid
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PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has dismissed allegations he is vying for the Kajang seat merely to resolve the party's internal feud, as suggested by many of his critics.

At a press conference at the Al Nadhoh mosque late last night, Anwar explained that it is beyond current Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim's (left) capabilities, or terms of reference, to handle the political challenges in Selangor, especially in the face of propaganda and pressure from the federal government.

Anwar said the overall strategy behind the "Kajang move" is that it is critical for Selangor to go beyond just being an efficient state, and to maintain the status quo.

"(For Selangor) to be seen as a model is to be able to withstand the incessant propaganda and continuous pressure from the federal government, which renders many of our programmes either delayed or derailed," Anwar said after addressing about 800 in Kubang Semang, in Seberang Perai, Penang.

The crowd included DAP, PAS and PKR supporters, including MPs Mansor Othman (Nibong Tebal), Sim Tze Tzin (Bayan Baru) and Steven Sim (Bukit Mertajam).

Social activist and former Gerakan leader Toh Kin Woon were among the speakers, who while seeking answers for Anwar's latest move, showed support for his candidacy in Kajang.

'Getting nowhere'

In explaining further about the challenges in Selangor, Anwar cited the case of water problems, adding that Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim has done everything in his power to resolve the matter.

"I have also been advising him on it but he is getting nowhere," disclosed Anwar, who is also opposition leader in Parliament and Permatang Pauh MP.

He cited similar cases of federal allocations and actions of the state religious departments.

The latest being the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (Jais) raid on the office of the Bible Society of Malaysia in Petaling Jaya on Jan 2. It seized 320 bibles in the Malay and Iban languages, while two of the organisation's staff were detained by the police.

Anwar said there are views that a Malay Muslim should be responding to these issues, which have national importance.

He added that as an opposition leader alone, he cannot enforce or act on these increasing challenges in Selangor.

"We have to recognise these are problems. There have been a lot of consternation and concern among our people, from Malays, Christians and others.

"Khalid has been, in some ways, very effective but this is beyond his capabilities and term of reference," he added.

Asked if Selangor needed more of a politician and not a CEO in the MB post, Anwar agreed. "The posts of prime minister, ministers, chief minister or menteri besar are political offices.

"But to suggest that this is purely an internal PKR feud, is not really correct. If it were, it does not warrant my intervention to this level. We are talking about governance.

"Where good governance and economic management is concerned, we will continue the good work of Khalid, but I think we need to go beyond that," he added.

Anwar said those who underestimated the importance of the political need to mobilise the state as a political force for Pakatan, are "grossly mistaken".

He added that Pakatan cannot effectively talk about an alternative government without the capacity to show proof that it can weather this storm.

Asked about the current public opinions, many of which show that people are confused about the situation in Selangor, Anwar it was due to the restrictions and limited coverage of the party's views in the media.

"Due to this, it is only fair that people raise their concerns about the issue. We will continue to explain," he said assured, adding that Umno has started its "vicious" campaign in Kajang.

Speculation rife

Speculation is rife that Anwar may engineer Khalid's resignation and take over the MB's post if he wins the Kajang seat, which does not sit well with some quarters, including PKR allies - DAP, PAS and some NGOs.

Others speculate that the recent manoeuvres relating to Kajang is Anwar's strategy to keep in check the party's deputy president Azmin Ali (right), a well-known rival in Khalid's court, who some claim, is also eyeing the MB's seat.

"There is a view (that Anwar should become MB) but we have to win the election first. So when people ask are you going to be the MB? I tell them, please help us win the Kajang seat first," he added.

There is also speculation that the Selangor sultan may intervene, dissolve the Selangor assembly and call for a state election if Khalid resigns.

"I don't think it is appropriate to involve the sultan. It is not fair to pre-judge the Tuanku in this matter," Anwar said.

"It is also not fair to prejudice our stance or comments and unnecessarily implicate the role of the ruler," he added.

"It is also unfair because we have the rule of law. Our constitution is clear and should be respected by all - the ruling and opposition parties," he stressed.

On his ability to juggle two posts - MP in Permatang Pauh and assemblyman in Kajang, Anwar replied: "Why is it not a problem for someone in Sabah or Sarawak?"

"I don't know why for an MP in Permatang Pauh, it is a problem. Kajang is just 30 minutes from KL, and Permatang Pauh is only 40 minutes by flight. In most cases, I come by car.

"It is a problem because it is Anwar. Others from Sabah and Sarawak are not Anwar," he said, smiling.

The Kajang seat fell vacant on Jan 27 when it's former assemblyman, Lee Chin Cheh, resigned - citing the "common good and to strengthen the party's ability to serve Selangor better" as the reason for his decision.

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