

**PKR's obsession tearing Pakatan dream apart**  
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COMMENT What is the top priority of Anwar Ibrahim and PKR?

Is it to keep nurturing Pakatan Rakyat as a strong coalition that presents a united front in replacing Barisan Nasional in GE14, or is it to install Anwar's wife as menteri besar of Selangor, at any and all costs?

The question seems to be a pertinent one as we look at the unfolding crisis in Selangor, and the options available to PKR.

The first option is to leave things as status quo, which results in stability all around (except of course for those desperate to make Selangor their personal piggy bank).

The other option is for Anwar and PKR to continue with their efforts to forcibly replace Abdul Khalid Ibrahim as the head of the Selangor government.

Let us examine the consequences of this course of action. We will begin with a brief recap of the latest developments.

PKR in Pakatan like Umno in BN?

First, PKR announces that internally, it has decided to replace Khalid with Anwar's wife, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who is also PKR president.

A Pakatan meeting is held, attended by Anwar, Lim Guan Eng and Mohammed Sabu - all top ranking leaders of Pakatan, except for Mat Sabu, who is only second in command in PAS.

Following the meeting, a statement is issued stating that Pakatan has 'accepted' the proposal for Wan Azizah to take over as Selangor menteri besar, and the leaders will take the matter back to their respective parties for discussion.

PAS number one Abdul Hadi Awang soon after releases a statement saying that PAS' position is for Khalid to stay as menteri besar.

Saifuddin Nasution then releases a response saying that this should not be, because at the aforementioned meeting, a decision was already made in support of replacing Khalid with Wan Azizah, and that this was agreed to by the three parties.

This is very confusing. If the matter had already been decided, then what need was there for the three party leaders to go back to their respective parties for discussion, as stated in

their original statement?

(There is also some confusion as to whether it is ethical or technically correct for Saifuddin (left) to currently be issuing anti-Khalid statements as secretary general of PKR while he runs for deputy president against Khalid. It is worth noting that voting results clearly demonstrate that more than a third of PKR members support Khalid versus Azmin Ali, with about half or Anwar's man Saifuddin trailing a very distant third.)

Is Pakatan becoming like BN, where Umno calls the shots, and the other parties are mere rubber stamps?

(For those who like primary sources, both press statements can be compared in verbatim here).

Anwar driving a rift within PAS?

Now, the two most respected leaders in PAS, Hadi and Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, have come out publicly in support of Khalid remaining as menteri besar, the latter rightfully lamenting that this polemic should not have tainted the holy month of Ramadan.

Their voices are added to that of Iskandar Samad, the Selangor PAS commissioner, meaning all the most directly relevant PAS leaders speak with one voice on this issue.

It is clear that there are a number of second tier PAS leaders who support PKR in this matter, despite the clear signal given from both Hadi and Nik Aziz.

The question is, what will happen if PKR persists in its attempted coup?

Will the PAS Anwaristas try to force the matter within PAS, and declare open war against Hadi and Nik Aziz? Or perhaps attempt a coup of their own within PAS?

If they do, then this opens one more in a series of debilitating rifts: within PKR, within Pakatan, and now within PAS.

PAS' discipline is its core strength

Any observer of Malaysian politics will note that PAS is possibly the only party in Malaysia that is built on genuine institutional strength.

Whether we agree with all of its principles, there is no doubt that PAS is more grounded in those principles than in individual leaders that come and go.

The same cannot be said of other parties, and nowhere is this more apparent than PKR's intensely individual-centric feudal politics.

No one can deny the power of PAS' party discipline. Any organiser of mass rallies in

Malaysia knows that whether there is a massive turnout depends on whether the PAS leadership issues a directive for party members to show up or not.

This sense of discipline, unity of purpose, and fervent belief in maintaining the chain of command has always defined PAS.

PAS members take the long view in believing that no storm is so bad that it necessitates breaking discipline aboard the ship.

This means that while internal democracy and airing of views are never suppressed, the heart and soul of the party is faith in and adherence to its internal structures, processes and elected leaders. To lose that is to lose PAS, and every member understands this.

An open rebellion against this time tested system could have unimaginable costs, including losing even more ground where Pakatan needs it most - the rural heartland of Malaysia.

Guan Eng sulking like a spoilt child?

Soon after Hadi's announcement, Lim Guan Eng essentially threatened the break-up of Pakatan Rakyat because of the Selangor menteri besar issue.

I cannot say I am entirely surprised, but I did not expect Lim to play the big card so quickly.

This can only mean that all this while, the single biggest decision maker in DAP has long prioritised DAP's own power base over the overarching goal of maintaining a united front to overthrow BN.

I suppose with megaprojects like the Penang undersea tunnel to keep DAP in the money for a long time to come, they can afford to pander to their hardline backers, with no concern over the larger picture of Malaysia's future.

Despite the controversy over hudud, in which PAS eventually backed down, never once has PAS spoken openly of leaving the Pakatan family. It seems Lim is rather more practised at playing the spoilt child.

Both PKR and DAP would be complete fools to think that they can break BN's hegemony by themselves. No one knows this better than they themselves.

Their actions then point to an increasingly simple conclusion: that they would rather fight like warlords over the scraps they currently control, than actually keep to earlier promises of putting their differences aside to concentrate on the changes we all know Malaysia so desperately needs.

Nothing but a sham marriage of convenience?

How shameful for so many of us who cried 'No!' when people accused Pakatan of being

nothing but a sham marriage of convenience. When push came to shove, it looks like they were right and we were wrong.

Despite Anwar now scrambling to do damage control, and playing good cop to Guan Eng's bad cop, his and PKR's obsession with power, money, and water payouts fundamentally still eclipses any understanding that voters - especially those in the pivotal middle ground - are beginning to see Pakatan cohesion as a joke.

The way things are clearly going, there will be no doubt any more that a vote for Pakatan will come to mean a vote for instability. After all, who could trust a party that fought so pettily and cannot agree on the most fundamental questions of choosing chief executives?

The first failed experiment in opposition unity was Barisan Alternatif, which lasted six years. Six years after the formation of Pakatan, it seems history is repeating itself.

I strongly doubt Malaysians will ever place any faith again in this particular experiment, should it fall apart again, as it inevitably will if Anwar and PKR stay their course.

When that happens, any project to take Malaysia back from BN would then once again be set back by decades - all because the man who failed his bid to become Prime Minister of Malaysia insists that his wife becomes the menteri besar of Selangor.

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