

PKR sacks Khalid over refusal to quit MB's post

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The PKR leadership council today sacked Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim from the party for his refusal to step down as the state's chief executive officer.

The move, which is bound to strain relations with coalition ally PAS, came after weeks of teetering as PKR held back from taking decisive action due to reservations expressed by its Islamic partner.

Party's disciplinary board chairperson Tan Kee Kwong (right) announced the decision after almost three hours of deliberation which began at 3pm at the PKR headquarters in Petaling Jaya.

The closed-door meeting was attended by all members of the party's leadership council with one notable absentee - Khalid.

Tan speaking at a press conference after the meeting said Khalid's refusal to relinquish his MB post along with several performance factors had led to the decision.

"(Khalid) was found to have defied the party's central committee decision after a meeting on July 21 that unanimously agreed to appoint Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as the new Selangor menteri besar," said Tan.

He said Khalid proceeded to issue a statement the next day to state his refusal to relinquish the post "and till this very day he continues to refuse to relinquish the said post".

"On that point alone, the disciplinary committee has found cause to expel him," said Tan.

He added further factors regarding Khalid's conduct that the central leadership has considered that support the decision, namely:

Khalid defied a decision by the Pakatan presidential council attended by PAS president Hadi Awang, DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang and PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim to put off the process and discussion of the Langkat 2 water treatment plant and put off the controversial increases in allowance for the state's speaker, menteri besar, exco members, and assemblypersons,

Failure to comply with the Pakatan presidential council decision that he himself had agreed upon, to involve the Selangor water restructuring committee in the water assets takeover exercise,

Insistence on proceeding with the Kinrara-Damansara Expressway (Kidex) despite the

party's directive to review the matter as it goes against the Pakatan manifesto,

Failure to explain thoroughly to the presidential council his RM70 million loan settlement with Bank Rakyat.

Tan added that Khalid has 14 days to appeal the decision from the time he is officially notified of his sacking, after which the PKR leadership council would decide whether to form a special committee to hear the appeal.

In the meantime, Khalid would remain as menteri besar until he resigns or is otherwise removed from office, such as through a vote of no confidence.

'Decision strictly on membership'

PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution told reporters at the same press conference that today's meeting dealt only with Khalid's status as a PKR member, and not his position as menteri besar.

He said any moves to remove Khalid from office would be announced later, but said Khalid should respect the fact that he no longer has majority support and vacate his office to make way for a successor.

To a question, Saifuddin denied that Khalid's dismissal was to pressure PAS not to back the Selangor MB.

Meanwhile, in response to another question, PKR central committee member Sivarasa Rasiah told reporters that a letter sent by Khalid's lawyers today was irrelevant to today's decision.

"It is not relevant because it does not address the core issue, which is that Khalid has defied clear orders from the party to resign as menteri besar, following the party's decision to propose PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as menteri besar.

"We have given him the chance to respond and he responded through two letters, which have been taken into consideration.

"As Saifuddin had mentioned, we find the contents (of the letters) showed open defiance. We asked him nicely to step down and he wouldn't step down, and that is enough (reason)," he said.

Earlier today, The Malay Mail Online reported that Khalid's lawyers have sent PKR a letter urging the party to explain Khalid's questions about the allegations against him.

"Our client in fact notes a litany of breaches of natural justice thus far giving rise to perception of conflict of interest and bias against our client," the letter reportedly said.

Sivarasa added that there is no need to entertain Khalid's request to postpone the

disciplinary hearing because the grounds for his dismissal are already clear, and Khalid's letters showed that he has no intention to answer the allegations against him.

"For us, due process has been fulfilled, natural justice has been done, he has been given the chance to answer the party's allegations.

"And not only he did he refuse, he openly defied (the party)," he said in explaining why there is no benefit to postponing the hearing.

Khalid remains defiant

On Tuesday, the PKR disciplinary committee issued Khalid with a show-cause letter ordering him to explain his defiance of the party's instructions to quit his post as menteri besar.

Khalid was also called to attend a disciplinary committee hearing yesterday to explain several other issues, such as Selangor's water restructuring exercise and hikes in business licence fees.

In response, Khalid claimed that the show-cause letter was faulty and said the disciplinary board's demands were both "unreasonable and suspicious".

"As a party fighting for justice for all, I should also be given a real chance, not just a mirage, to answer to the allegations of my wrongdoing.

"Unfortunately, the actions of YB Datuk (Tan) and the disciplinary board up until now are highly suspect," he said, pointing to the short notice of the hearing and asked for the meeting to be postponed to Aug 15.

The disciplinary board meeting nevertheless went ahead yesterday without Khalid's presence.

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