

Azmin one step closer to becoming MB?

MalaysiaKini.com

Sept 9, 2014

ANALYSIS In his Merdeka message on Aug 31, penned amid the ongoing crisis in Selangor, PKR deputy president Azmin Ali delved into the history of the Malacca sultanate.

Recalling Anwar Ibrahim's remarks in 2009, Azmin said the opposition leader had underscored the importance of handling issues pertaining to the monarchy with moderation, wisdom and firmness.

In this context, Azmin cited three scenarios - the first Hang Tuah, who possessed blind loyalty for the sultan, the treacherous Hang Jebat, who spilled the blood of the innocent, and in between the two friends-turned-nemesis, Bendahara Paduka Raja, who was loyal and wise.

He pointed out that Bendahara Paduka Raja's sapience had ensured the invulnerability of the national institution, taking into account the welfare of the people of Malacca.

Setting aside who Azmin had in mind with regard to Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat, the question is whether he is the Bendahara Paduka Raja in the Selangor imbroglio?

Having played his cards right since the onset, will Azmin become the next menteri besar?

PKR's insistence on nominating its president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as the sole candidate for the post earned it and its ally, DAP, a sharp rebuke from the palace, which accused the two parties of being insolent and defiant.

Buckling under royal pressure, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng apologised to the sultan and vowed to return to the drawing board to discuss submitting more names to the palace.

Tonight, PKR's political bureau will meet to deliberate on the situation and pundits predict that Azmin's name is almost certain to be on the fresh list.

But should Anwar remain recalcitrant in nominating his wife alone, then it will place him on the confrontational path with the sultan and it remains to be seen if others in his party will be willing to tread that thorny part with their leader.

With the imbroglio dragging for months, many in PKR and the opposition bloc are weary and concerned that the fissures, especially with PAS, will sound the death knell for Pakatan Rakyat.

Another name bandied about as a possible successor to current Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid

Ibrahim is Selangor PAS chief and current state exco Iskandar Samad.

If Iskandar is chosen, DAP will be opposed to it and this may lead to a no-confidence motion against him when the state legislative assembly convenes.

Reservations about Iskandar

This will leave the monarch red-faced and plunge Selangor into another political quandary.

The same scenario can happen should the sultan choose someone who is not on the lists submitted by PKR, DAP and PAS.

But pundits claim that if Azmin's name is not on the lists and should the sultan pick him, there will be minimal, if any, resistance.

Furthermore, PKR insiders told Malaysiakini that there are reservations about Iskandar (left), among them, if he will stand up against the pro-unity government forces in PAS.

On the other hand, Azmin is viewed as being committed to the Pakatan agenda as illustrated in his statement yesterday which stressed on the importance of unity in the coalition following the palace's stern reprimand.

Compared to Iskandar, the PKR deputy president and the party's Selangor chief is a more recognisable face.

Having been with Anwar since he was in government, there are those who believe Azmin is deserving of the menteri besar post.

Certain factions in PKR concede that he is a better choice than Wan Azizah in terms of administrating the resource-rich Selangor, which is regarded as the crown jewel in the party's electoral victory chest.

Azmin's appointment, they argued, will leave their political rivals without fodder to accuse PKR of practicing nepotism and installing a "remote controlled" menteri besar.

On the same note, Azmin is said to have a good relationship with the palace, which will allow PKR to govern the state without royal hiccups.

However, there also those who are opposed to Azmin taking over the leadership reins. And the voices of discontent come from Wan Azizah's camp.

His detractors have always portrayed the PKR number two as being cast in an Umno mould and that his former party's political craft runs deep in his veins.

There is also the fear of Azmin becoming too powerful should the Federal Court, which sits at the end of October, uphold Anwar's sodomy conviction.

The next few days will determine if Azmin emerges as the winner from this protracted saga. As it stands now, his stars are shining bright.

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