PKR looks to Azizah, DAP guns for opposition chief
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By Nigel Aw

Hours after Anwar Ibrahim was taken to the Sungai Buloh prison, the question on who will replace him as opposition leader has surfaced.

However, Malaysiakini learnt that DAP has its sights on the post.

According to party sources, DAP wants its supremo Lim Kit Siang to be appointed.

Contacted later, PKR secretary-general Rafizi Ramli confirmed that DAP had previously conveyed this to them but said any final decision would only be known after the Pakatan Rayat leadership meeting, tentatively slated for Friday.

"It was never formally discussed before but DAP did mention that if Anwar goes to jail, then the opposition leader post should go to Lim as they have the most number of seats in Parliament," he told Malaysiakini.

DAP controls 37 seats in Parliament, followed by PKR with 29 and PAS 21. This is after DAP lost Teluk Intan and former Selangor menteri besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim was sacked from PKR and hence becoming an independent.

With Anwar's jailing, PKR will have to also vacate the Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency.

Lim, on the other hand, is the most senior leader in the opposition, having served as MP since 1969 with only a brief break between 1999 and 2004 when he was defeated in Bukit Bendera.

The veteran also served as opposition leader thrice during his career.

DAP, which saw Anwar as the candidate for prime minister, had conceded the opposition leader position to him despite winning the most parliamentary seats in Pakatan.

When quizzed, DAP national organising secretary Anthony Loke declined to confirm or deny the matter.

"The question of the opposition leader will be discussed at the Pakatan leadership council and we will put forward our arguments then.

"I do not want to pre-empt our decision and do not want to reveal what is our arguments until then," he said.

DAP assures Pakatan takes precedent

Loke said regardless of DAP's arguments, its priority is to ensure that the opposition coalition can remain intact.

Meanwhile, Rafizi said within PKR itself, the party too has not discussed about its candidate for the opposition leader post.

However, he added that DAP may be willing to concede if PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail returns to Parliament and takes up the position of opposition leader.

"If Wan Azizah contests in Permatang Pauh, then DAP may be more willing to offer the opposition leader position to her as she had previously held the position.

"Wan Azizah has been the symbol of Anwar before he became opposition leader," he said.

Rafizi also revealed that in previous Pakatan discussions, there have been proposals that the opposition leader be appointed on a rotation basis between DAP, PKR and PAS.

However, he said tonight's Pakatan meeting, which is at the secretary-general level, will focus on providing direction to supporters.

He also denied an Astro Awani news tweet quoting PKR deputy president Azmin Ali that the opposition leader will be decided at a Pakatan meeting within 24 hours.

"It is sensitive to discuss the position of opposition leader right now. We need to first coordinate our efforts, some of our supporters even want to go to the streets now so we need to make sure they get the right instructions," he said.

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