

Pakatan not 'bushwhacked' by sports betting decision
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While some may be celebrating the government's decision to back off from issuing the licence for sports betting, Pakatan Rakyat leaders are not in the least impressed.

PAS vice-president Mahfuz Omar said that he had already anticipated which way the decision would fall from Prime Minister Najib Razak's "flip-flopping" over whether to approve the licence or not .

"It just shows how shallow his thinking is and how slow he is at perceiving how sports betting can pose a social threat.

"Only news of a massive demonstration made Najib wake up to the public uproar over the issue," he said, referring to the mammoth protest rally against sports betting planned for July 3.

The Pokok Sena MP also unveiled a theory of his own, saying that the decision announced after the Umno supreme council meeting last night exposed a deepening rift within Umno.

Mahfuz Omar handing over to Idris Ahmad PAS HQ 220609 01 "Umno can't pull themselves together, starting from Johor Umno publicly denouncing sports betting. This reveals a crisis between Najib and deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin, Mahfuz (right) added.

What power sharing?

The DAP youth, on its part, also questioned why the announcement came as a result of an Umno supreme council meeting, and not a cabinet's.

"Does this mean that the Umno supreme council decides all government policies, and not the cabinet comprising all the BN component party leaders? Where is the power sharing concept that was supposed to be one of BN's main principles?

"The Umno hegemony in BN only shows that the other component parties are merely there for decorative purposes," charged its chairperson Anthony Loke.

The Rasah MP also recalled that the MCA, MIC and PPP leadership had supported sports betting.

"NONE We want to know what is their stand is now? Or are they just going to support whatever Umno had decided ?" Loke (left) said in a statement.

Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua's take was that the entire episode would not have occurred if the government had practised what they had "preached" in the New Economic Model, which is the promotion of consultation with the rakyat and transparency.

"I think that Najib's lack of public consultation in the first place, and the lack of transparency have resulted in the diminishing of the government's credibility, and has affected confidence in the stock market," said the first-term DAP parliamentary.

Only one broken golden egg

In the meantime, the vocal Oxford degree holder said that it was unlikely that Berjaya Corporation tycoon Vincent Tan will sue the government over the matter.

"This is only one broken golden egg. Why kill the goose?" he asked.

He also said that he expects the company to reel in their losses and lick their wounds in private.

NONE "They will have to make the necessary announcement to Bursa Malaysia soon," Pua (right) said, adding that Berjaya should not be blamed since the Finance Ministry has the power to revoke licences anytime they want.

BCorp had announced to Bursa on May 12 that they had government "approval" to conduct sports betting.

However, Najib said in a written reply to Batu MP Tian Chua's question on June 7, that the licence has not been issued "pending public feedback". Since then, there has been confusion over whether Berjaya had deliberately misled Bursa.

Ascot Sports Sdn Bhd, one of Berjaya's subsidiaries, was initially granted the licence in 1987, but it proved to be an unprofitable venture before the advent of satellite TV and the Internet in Malaysia.

That licence was revoked in 2004 under then premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, but was "pending re-issuance" as stated by Berjaya which had exercised their right of first refusal.

If issued, sports-betting was supposed to be offered at 220 selected Sports Toto - also part of Berjaya's group of companies - outlets in West Malaysia come September in time for the highly popular English Premier League.

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