

**Sabah PKR 12: Folly to revive old issue**  
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COMMENT 'The March of Folly' is a compelling book by the famed writer of popular history, Barbara W Tuchman, which ought to be recommended reading for PKR supreme council members before a critical meeting on Sunday.

The members, or more accurately, central players within the council, ought to ponder Tuchman's study of "folly or perversity", which was the cause, she says, of many a disastrous episode in history from the Trojan Horse of Troy to Vietnam.

Tuchman attributes this "folly or perversity" to the compulsion to act against one's own best interest and in the face of urgent warning and a feasible alternative.

That is likely to happen if the PKR supreme council endorses the recommendation of its disciplinary committee that 12 members with potential to become divisional leaders in Sabah in upcoming party polls are suspended for their role in applying to set up Parti Cinta Sabah (PCS) early last December.

The 12 shaped to form PCS when their leader, Jeffrey Kitingan (left), was not chosen as Sabah chief for PKR the previous October.

Of course Jeffrey, with his reputation for party hopping, should have stopped them but splintering and party-hopping are not things he started in Sabah. Umno encouraged an orgy of party-hopping in Sabah in the mid-1990s to topple the PBS government of Pairin Kitingan. Some of those complicit in that sorry episode are now in PKR.

This reminder has to be brought up as a check on the self-righteousness of some in PKR pushing for punitive action against the splinter-wanting 12.

Peace pact

In the event, the would-be rebels withdrew their application to form PCS when a pact to prevent Sabah PKR from fragmenting was in the offing.

The pact was negotiated and firmed up by the middle of December. Agreement was reached whereby Jeffrey was made overall chief of PKR strategy for Sabah and Sarawak while several appointed in the exercise in early October were retained.

In the relief over the pact's success in preventing a schism, care was not taken to ensure an understanding reached that no action would be taken against the would-be rebels was engraved in stone.

On one side of the now reopening divide in PKR Sabah politics, it is said that that understanding was firm; on the other, the contention is that it was not.

In ordinary circumstances, action would have had to be taken against behaviour such as the 12 exhibited. Otherwise you are asking for trouble down the road. But this is Sabah politics and exceptions are the norm rather than the rarity.

Following the renewal of a complaint made by some PKR members in June, the matter of disciplinary action against the 12 was revived.

## Perceived treachery

On Wednesday, a disciplinary cohort from PKR headquarters went to Sabah, inquired into the matter, and recommended a period of suspension for the errant 12.

The Jeffrey Kitingan faction is aghast at the perceived treachery; others claim the suspension is justified.

Now the recommendation is before the PKR supreme council which meets on Sunday.

If the party is not bothered about the threat of a repeat of the turmoil that erupted in its Sabah chapter in October last year when the initial line-up for the state was announced, it would endorse the suspension. Otherwise a stern warning to the 12 would have to do.

The entire matter is said to be related to an expected contest for the No 2 position in the national line-up of the party.

That this contest is one that bodes ill for PKR is something that has already been argued in these columns and partly confirmed by the present ructions in Sabah PKR.

The arguments against a contest for the No 2 position have been understandably panned as undemocratic. But better a stinting on democracy than inviting schisms in a party that has yet to cohere and is very much a work in progress.

It is folly for PKR to overestimate its capacity for internal cohesion.

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