

Sabah 12: Telling the men from the boys
Malaysiakini.com
August 29, 2010

COMMENT The PKR disciplinary committee that recommended a year's suspension for 12 members in Sabah aligned to the Jeffery Kitingan faction relied solely on deductive logic to arrive at their conclusions.

The 12 had filed an application to form Parti Cinta Sabah on Dec 4 and withdrew the application two days later. The filing move was cause for disciplinary action.

NONE From inquiries, the disciplinarians concluded the 12 had not been instructed by Jeffery (right) to form the new party. When the 12 could not furnish documentary proof thereof, the disciplinarians deduced that the motive for the withdrawal of the application was not credible.

As disclosed by the 12, the motive was that details of negotiations successfully concluded in Kuala Lumpur on Dec 5-6 - an effort in which Jeffery was involved - required the withdrawal of the application.

The disciplinarians concluded that if Jeffery had not prompted the filing in the first place, there was no reason for him to make the matter a subject of negotiations.

Furthermore, on Dec 20, no less than PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim had assured a Sabah PKR convention that action would have to be taken against the would-be rebels.

Therefore not only Jeffery had no reason to make the application an item in the negotiated deal, the party supremo had given no public indication that forgiveness for the errant 12 was part of the peace pact.

Conclusion: The 12 had no reasonable cause for their splinter-forming behaviour; no corroboration for what their motive was when they retracted their move; and had public notice to expect punishment for their initial misbehaviour.

The 12 had been frivolous and vexatious. Hence the recommendation of a year's suspension, a measure set for deliberation by the PKR leadership council this afternoon.

How party supporters must wish things were that simple!

Peace pact

Unfortunately, they are not. There was a peace pact in which forgiveness for the would-be rebels was part of the deal. However, the details were not engraved in stone.

The consequent ambiguity was compounded by administrative confusion that arose from the resignation of Salehuddin Hashim, the PKR secretary-general, in January this year.

This was followed by highly public internal ructions following the departure of a few MPs from PKR, a tumultuous phase in the party's recent history.

Five Sabah PKR members who had filed a complaint last December about the behaviour of the would-be rebels had waited until June for action to be taken.

When no action was forthcoming, they filed another complaint. Last week, a disciplinary cohort from PKR headquarters went to Kota Kinabalu, inquired into the matter, and deductively concluded that the errant 12 should be suspended.

Politics rendered volatile

There is no question whether there was a peace pact in Sabah PKR. There was a deal; the only thing in doubt is whether it entailed no action against the 12.

Contention over that issue is now threatening to rip apart a painstakingly gained pact firmed up by mid-December.

That deal brought a tenuous calm to Sabah PKR politics rendered volatile when a leadership line-up that sidelined Jeffery Kitingan was announced in October last year.

Sabah, and sister territory Sarawak, would not bulk large in PKR's calculations if the party and allies DAP and PAS, had not denied Umno-BN their customary two-thirds parliamentary majority in the general election of March 2008.

The two states are now critical to the PKR-fueled opposition's aspirations to take over the running of the country.

They say that in a race, it is the last 50 meters that separate the men from the boys. The 'Sabah PKR 12 issue' is fast shaping up to be one that draws the line of distinction between the truly seasoned and the parvenus in the party.

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