

S'wak PKR tells Anwar to settle Sabah crisis swiftly
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PKR Sarawak wants Anwar Ibrahim to use his personal influence to bring a swift end to the simmering crisis in the Sabah chapter. Any further delay, it is said, would have an uncertain impact on the party facing imminent state elections in Sarawak.

Anwar received this firm message during a lightning visit to Limbang and Lawas with an overnight stopover in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, returning to Kuching on Wednesday.

Baru Bian Sarawak PKR-leader at Bruno Manser commemoration "We told Anwar frankly that the issue of the 12 Sabah PKR leaders facing disciplinary action is affecting morale and preparation in Sarawak," said state PKR chief Baru Bian (left). "He must be bold and decisive. This issue had been settled. Suddenly, it flared up again and caught us all by surprise."

Bian said Anwar could see for himself during his Limbang and Lawas visits that Sarawak PKR was in "high spirits" and that the ground preparations for the coming polls was proceeding as scheduled.

He added that several hundred members in Limbang and twice that number in Lawas had greeted the party supremo. "These are small places and yet the turnout was something that Anwar himself did not expect," he said.

According to Bian, Anwar was also taken by the turnout of the Sarawak business community when he visited Bandar Seri Begawan on Tuesday.

"When asked about the chances (for the opposition coalition) in Sarawak, (Anwar) told them that he was an incurable optimist," he said.

In short, the only factor that could adversely affect PKR's momentum in Sarawak at this juncture would be the Sabah chapter's disintegration. It is said that Sarawak, being a late starter with PKR, looks to Sabah for its cues.

Sabah troubles unsettling

The Dayaks in particular would feel unsettled if there was the slightest perception that the KadazanDusunMurut were getting a raw deal from the party, stressed Bian.

kitingan project ic 250107 jeffery kitingan "PKR national vice-president Jeffrey Kitingan (left) from Sabah has been instrumental in building up the party in Sarawak," he said.

Compounding the Sarawak PKR dilemma is that the 12 errant Sabah leaders - 11 Dusuns and one Biannai - had visited the state frequently to help with preparations including the Batang Ai and Sibu by-elections.

In addition, the 11 Dusuns are involved in the Borneo Dayak Forum along with the Dayak members in Sarawak PKR, and have also made two visits to Pontianak, Kalimantan, to enlist new members.

Bian, who missed the national political bureau and supreme council meetings in Petaling Jaya last week, stressed that the peace plan of Dec 13 last year was the best way forward

out of the crisis.

NONEHe completely agreed with Chua Jui Meng, who accompanied Anwar (right), that "there should be no witch-hunt as agreed under the Dec 13 formula".

Bian said Anwar on Wednesday briefed party members in Kuching at length on the crisis in Sabah. He had given the assurance that steps were being taken to bring an amicable end to the dilemma posed by the 12.

"According to Anwar, some new evidence had surfaced that necessitated the taking of the pending disciplinary action against the Sabah 12," said Bian. "He doesn't see the new evidence as covered by the peace plan."

New evidence

On the new evidence, Bian disclosed that the Registrar of Societies had confirmed that the Sabah 12 only withdrew their application to register Parti Cinta Sabah (PCS) on Jan 4, that is after the peace plan had been approved on Dec 13 and implemented - partially - on Dec 22.

Earlier, the party headquarters had been under the impression that the PCS application had been withdrawn on Dec 4 or before the peace plan went into affect.

"Anwar stressed on the new evidence and thinks that the disciplinary process should have been allowed to run its course," said Bian, who is a practising lawyer.

"Instead, there was a pre-emptive rush to judgment on the appeal process. Some media reported that only three leaders would be suspended and the others let off with warning letters."

The result, continued Bian, was the party secretary-general issuing a clarification that all 12 leaders involved with PCS had been suspended as per the disciplinary committee's recommendation.

"The final verdict, whatever its form, cannot logically be announced before the appeal process had been completed," he said.

'Not anti-Christian'

Anwar was also anxious to assure the gathering in Kuching that he "was not anti-Christian as painted by some of the media in the wake of the disciplinary action against the promoters of PCS".

"We must give Anwar the benefit of the doubt in the conduct of the disciplinary and appeal process," said Bian.

"It shouldn't be long before we can bring this unfortunate episode to a close."

Bian did not want to be drawn into widespread allegations that the timing of the disciplinary process had something to do with the nominations for party elections over the next two months.

Being a party man, he said, he "draws a firm line against washing dirty linen in public".

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