

Pakatan must select Sabah leaders with care
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The impact of Pakatan Rakyat's pledge to give Sabah full autonomy if they rise to power in the next general elections will depend squarely on the figures who will stand under their banner.

Political analyst James Chin believes that this is particularly important for PKR, considering the chequered past shared between Sabahans and the party's advisor Anwar Ibrahim.

NONEDuring his tenure as deputy prime minister under Dr Mahathir Mohamad's administration, Anwar (right) was seen as the man behind the downfall of the-then opposition PBS government in 1994.

Despite having won the state elections for the third straight time, albeit by a simple majority, eventually control of Sabah slipped from PBS, following a spate of defections to the BN by senior leaders.

"The people have mixed feelings about Anwar, but if PKR can find credible leaders in Sabah, I don't think it will be an issue," Chin said when contacted today.

When launching Pakatan Sabah in Kota Kinabalu on Wednesday night, Anwar, along with DAP advisor Lim Kit Siang and PAS deputy president Nasharudin Mat Isa, pledged that the Pakatan would give Sabah full autonomy should the coalition take over Putrajaya in the next polls.

"Sabah affairs will be determined by Sabah," Anwar said as quoted by The Borneo Post today.

National and state Pakatan leaders from all three coalition members - PKR, PAS and DAP - attended the event, though independent opposition party SAPP was conspicuous by its absence.

NONEChin, (left) who teaches at Monash University, played down SAPP staying away, saying that it would not matter so long as all opposition parties agree to go on one-on-one contests in the coming general elections.

He acknowledged that the pledge is significant in Sabah as sentiments are still strong over the perceived disregard by the federal government of the 20-point agreement signed when forming Malaysia with Malaya, Sarawak and Singapore in 1963.

bn supreme council mt meeting sapp sabah issue 190608 taib mahmudHe pointed out that it won't bear as much impact in Sarawak as despite undercurrents of dissent against the federal government, the state government under Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud (right) has pretty much kept federal interference to a minimum.

"There has been much higher federal intervention in Sabah, because of the opposition government," he said, referring to PBS.

Promises remain promises

Ranau Umno chief Masidi Manjun was, however, sceptical of the pledge, questioning Anwar's motives in making such a lofty promise.

"Bear in mind, if he wants to give Sabah autonomy, he should have done that when he was DPM," he said.

Upko treasurer-general Marcus Mojigoh was equally critical of the autonomy pledge, calling it "bait" to lure Sabahans over to the Pakatan's side.

"It's very obvious in the eyes of the people. They (Pakatan) have been trying to spur the people's sentiments and gain support in Sabah.

azmin ali interview 220307 size"At the same time, they don't walk the talk. At one time, they put (PKR vice-president) Azmin (Ali) (left) as Sabah (PKR) chief and here they come again to offer autonomy... people interpret this as playing games," he said.

Masidi, nevertheless, sees a silver lining in all this, with greater attention for Sabah from federal leaders from both sides of the political divide, though he warned that it would be foolish to believe any pledge hook, line and sinker.

"Pakatan is no different from any other political party. Politicians will make promises... the issue is fulfilling those promises," he said

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