

Karim Ghani leaves Sabah Umno for PKR  
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Sabah Umno's Karim Ghani, the man described as "singlehandedly responsible" for bringing the peninsular Malaysia-based party to the state, has formally joined Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), he said in a statement.

The ruling BN will lose the coming general election, Karim declared at a press conference yesterday, but declined to get into specifics.

"I am so glad that PKR welcomes me," the Indian-Dusun who was initially with the United Sabah National Organisation (Usno) said yesterday. "I submitted my application directly to the PKR headquarters."

NONEKarim (left) said he informed de facto PKR chief Anwar Ibrahim, outgoing Sabah state chief Ahmad Thamrin Jaini and several divisional chiefs of his intention to join the party.

Explaining his reasons for joining PKR, he said that they were the same reasons he cited when leaving Sabah Umno.

"Pakatan has pledged to honour the autonomy of Sabah (and Sarawak) and give 20 percent oil royalty (to the two states)," said Karim. "This is in line with what I stated in my resignation letter to Sabah Umno."

"Umno made me sit near the toilet'

Sabah Umno, Karim said, came in pledging that the autonomy of Sabah would be honoured and that it would help Usno members stand up to the then-ruling Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS).

Instead, he lamented, Umno ignored the state constitution to the extent that the chief minister is chosen by Putrajaya and not by the Sabah head of state.

"I myself was sidelined and asked by Sabah Umno to sit somewhere near the jamban (toilet)," fumed Karim. "They (Umno) are more interested in Pairin (PBS president Joseph Pairin Kitingan) - than people like me or the other Usno leaders who have sacrificed so much for the party."

If the people of Sabah want to maintain the status quo, he said, they could support the BN. However, if they were concerned about the agenda for change and reform, they should support Pakatan "and not allow themselves to be split as that would bring victory to BN by default".

There was no immediate reaction from Sabah PKR leaders.

The speculation among party members is that Karim is angling for a role as the new state PKR chief. It's not known whether this is possible, since he has just joined the party and isn't a division leader like the others eyeing the post.

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