

**Opposition forms Pakatan Rakyat  
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Top leaders of opposition parties - multiracial PKR, pre-dominantly Chinese DAP and Islamic-based PAS - today announced that they have agreed to form a new coalition called Pakatan Rakyat or People's Alliance. MCPX

pas pkr dap pc barisan rakyat coalition 010408 02At a joint press conference this morning, PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim said the leaders will now take the proposal back to their respective parties for approval.

Anwar, who was flanked by DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang and PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang, said that the People's Alliance will hold its maiden conference after the proposal has been endorsed by all three parties.

Also present was the new parliamentary opposition leader, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who is PKR president and Anwar's wife.

"Pakatan Rakyat pledges to uphold the rights and interests of all Malaysians as enshrined in the Constitution," said Anwar.

He said the governments of Kelantan, Kedah, Penang, Perak and Selangor would now be known as Pakatan Rakyat state governments.

pas pkr dap pc barisan rakyat coalition 010408 03"The policies of these governments will be conducted in accordance with the policies of Pakatan Rakyat," he said.

"We have developed and strengthened the structure of Pakatan Rakyat by creating under the leadership council - consisting of the leaders of the three parties - a joint secretariat consisting of three leaders from each party.

"This joint secretariat will be tasked with building the foundation and framework of the Pakatan Rakyat for ratification by the leadership council."

Anwar said that a convention of all Pakatan Rakyat representatives to Parliament and the state assemblies will be held on April 27.

PAS and PKR are members of the existing Barisan Alternatif which was formed in 1999. DAP was originally a member, but quit the grouping two years later, due to bitter disagreement with PAS over its Islamic state policy.

**'Don't harp on Islamic state'**

However, Hadi sought to play down PAS' Islamic state policy by arguing that this was not part of the party's constitution.

Despite repeated questioning, neither Hadi, Lim nor Anwar could confirm if PAS would abandon its ambition to form an Islamic state.

"The media should be looking at the (PAS) administration of Kelantan and Terengganu which has been accepted by people of all faiths. They have accepted that we practise

fairness and equality without leaving any group behind," said Hadi.

pas pkr dap pc barisan rakyat coalition 010408 05Anwar stressed that the Islamic state issue has not been raised by PAS for several years now and that the coalition would only deliberate on issues explicitly raised by the three parties.

"Why harp on the issue and provoke them to respond? To be fair, should PAS still make (it) an issue, it is okay for us to respond. But as I see it, they have not made this an issue for years," he said.

"We never raised the issue of an Islamic state (in the meeting). I must reiterate that this issue had not cropped up in PAS manifesto," Anwar added.

Hadi Awang said his party would not take any action that would create anxiety among Malaysia's multiracial society.

"PAS is an Islamic party. But we have a common ideology and that is we will fight for justice, we oppose corruption and promote human rights," he said.

pas pkr dap pc barisan rakyat coalition 010408 04Lim said the emphasis is to focus on "common principles among the three parties".

He said the alliance was a "logical step forward" following the opposition's stunning gains.

"The message of the March 8 elections is very clear. The people want to see the three parties work together and bring about change... they want to see change in the area of justice, democracy and good governance," he said.

"The message of the people is not for an Islamic state or hudud law. I think the message is very clear on that. That is the basis of (the three parties) coming together."

Asked if the three parties are equal partners within the coalition, Anwar said any problems within the three parties would be ironed out collectively.

He dismissed any suggestion that he is the leader of the group, saying he was merely their spokesperson for today's press conference.

He also said that it was too early to say if the three parties would contest under a common banner in the future.