

BN exodus to begin tomorrow?
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K Kabilan

Speculations are rife that a Barisan Nasional component party will be making an important announcement tomorrow that would leave Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's government hanging in a balance.
MCPX

Sources told Malaysiakini tonight that the announcement by the Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) tomorrow will "lead to a drastic change of the political scenario in Malaysia".

However the sources refused to reveal if the party would leave the 14-member BN coalition and join Anwar Ibrahim-led Pakatan Rakyat.

A party official confirmed that Sapp leadership will be making an important announcement tomorrow at a press conference to be held in Kota Kinabalu.

"You'll find out about it at the news conference," he said when pressed for more details.

He also stressed that the party's decision was made with the "state's and people's interest" in mind.

And all that he was willing to divulge was that his party was not the only one who would be making the "shocking move".

Anwar waiting in the wings

In recent months PKR's de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has claimed that he had the necessary members of parliament who were willing to defect from BN to Pakatan Rakyat.

Anwar needs a total number of 30 BN MPs to be able to form government.

anwar ibrahim 02 060207And on Sunday, Anwar openly asked the people to give his government a chance, stating that he had the necessary numbers to force a change in government.

He added that he had MPs from almost all major BN partners who were ready to jump ship and be part of the Pakatan government. This was followed by denials from almost all BN coalition parties.

To make things interesting, Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah announced over the weekend that he was told during his visit to Sabah that one BN coalition party was ready to crossover before the end of this month.

While Razaleigh did not name the party, he was widely believed to be referring to Sapp.

Political manoeuvres

Yesterday Sapp deputy president Raymond Tan Shu Kiah denied that his party was about to defect to Pakatan.

When asked about this denial, the Sabah sources told Malaysiakini that Tan's remarks were just part and parcel of "political manoeuvres".

Yong Teck Lee's SAPP is led by outspoken former chief minister Yong Teck Lee, who in recent months has questioned Abdullah's policies towards Sabah and the federal government's inability to solve the illegal migrants' problems in the state.

SAPP has two members of parliament and four state assemblypersons, which means that this party's defection alone, if it is announced in the press conference tomorrow or if it happens anytime soon, would not be sufficient for Pakatan to form the new federal government.

SAPP MPs and state assembly reps Sabah 160608 After winning the March 8 general election with the help of Sabah and Sarawak coalition partners, Abdullah has been under immense pressure to repay these two states for delivering the votes.

As a result, Abdullah has given some top posts in the Parliament to the Sabah and Sarawak MPs. He has also announced billion-ringggit projects for Sabah and Sarawak.

He is however still under fire for not giving enough sweeteners, especially cabinet posts.

Abdullah has made his second trip this month to Sabah today to meet with state BN leaders. It is unclear whether he would be able to head off the desertion. Yong was conspicuously missing from the meeting.

Sources said that if SAPP decided to leave BN tomorrow, their departure could lead the way for other parties to do the same, giving Abdullah's government little choice but to either call for a snap election or be ready to hand over the government to Anwar's Pakatan.

PBS leader quits in protest

Meanwhile, in an unrelated development, a firm critic of Abdullah has decided to quit his party after having failed to force the premier to step down.

Suhakam roundtable KK Sabah 020806 Dr Chong Eng Leong Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) supreme council member Dr Chong Eng Leong tendered his resignation from the party today, to take effect immediately.

Chong, also the party's Luyang division chief, had been critical on the federal government and the prime minister for not taking concrete action on the calls to resolve the illegal immigrants and illegal issuance of MyKad to foreigners.

"Statements after statements begging our prime minister to hear our cries to defend our security and sovereignty in past years fell on deaf ears," he said in a statement.

"He (Abdullah) did not mean what he says. I want him to leave office but instead I was asked to leave PBS by PBS," he said.

He added that Abdullah had simply ignored Sabah leaders' calls for the formation of the

royal commission on illegal immigrants and instead announced the formation of the federal cabinet committee, which he said was the same old committee set up in 2000.

PBS is also a BN coalition partner.

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