

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 02/04/2008

It's now called Pakatan Rakyat

NST- 2/4/2008.

■ By Marc Lourdes
marc@nst.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The tripartite Pas-DAP-PCR grouping, which made significant gains in last month's general election, has agreed to a formal coalition called Pakatan Rakyat.

Bigwigs from the three ideologically diverse parties, including Parti Keadilan Rakyat president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang and Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, met at the office of PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday to discuss the arrangement.

In a joint statement, they said the name Pakatan Rakyat had been proposed pending official endorsement by the respective parties.

It is still uncertain whether the formalised coalition would seek an immediate registration, with Lim and Anwar non-committal on the matter when asked.

One of the understandings reached was that all state governments under their control (Kelantan, Perlis, Terengganu, Kedah and Selangor) would conduct policies in accordance with those of Pakatan Rakyat.

Anwar said the coalition, which would be led collectively, would work towards common principles as published in the various party

manifestos.

A joint secretariat, consisting three representatives of each party, has been formed to develop and strengthen the structure and framework of Pakatan Rakyat.

Asked about how Pas and DAP, which have very differing ideologies, would approach the coalition, Anwar said they worked together on principles like justice and fairness.

"We are committed to a reform programme backed by the spirit of the Constitution.

"I don't see any difficulty. We have reached a consensus," he said.

Questioned as to which party would dominate the coalition, Anwar replied that the dominant force was the rakyat.

"The agenda is clear. It makes no difference whoever is the menteri besar. They are tied to policies determined by Pakatan Rakyat."

Replying to questions on Pas' alleged intentions to form an Islamic state, Anwar and Abdul Hadi both said it was an issue that should not be made contentious any more.

"It was not mentioned in the Pas manifesto and has not been mentioned for a long time.

"It is no longer an issue," Anwar said.

Abdul Hadi said the issue should not be raised to create

trouble and that the truth was that Islam as a religion supported basic principles such as fighting corruption and creating good governance.

Speaking on the failed attempt to create a workable coalition via the Barisan Alternatif in 1999, Lim said they had learnt the lesson from that first, abortive attempt at forming a multi-ethnic opposition front.

"We have learnt and come together on common principles that the people can support," he said.

In a telephone interview later, Lim said he expected the Pakatan Rakyat framework to be finalised in a matter of weeks.

He added that DAP had no relationship with Pas prior to March 8, but the message from the people on that day was that they wanted the parties to work together to restore justice, freedom and democracy.

"The challenge is for us to rise to the expectations of the people."

A convention of all Pakatan Rakyat parliamentary and state assembly representatives will be held on April 27 to further the understanding of the coalition's policies.

On Monday night, at a rally at Stadium Melawati in Shah Alam, Abdul Hadi spoke about the formation of the coalition, saying it would welcome defecting Barisan Nasional parliamentarians.