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Citizens' Declaration hits a speedbump

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PETALING JAYA: The Citizens' Declaration, which is being promoted by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has taken a knock after former Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issued a letter describing it as flawed.

His wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and daughter Nurul Izzah had refused to sign the petition, which called for the removal of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. PAS had also refused to sign the petition, which the organisers said had collected over 1.2 million signatures.

On Monday, Anwar, in a leaked letter from prison, had expressed his concern over cooperation between Opposition leaders and Dr Mahathir.

Anwar has cautioned his party to be careful in any alliance with Dr Mahathir in the so-called Citizens' Declaration initiative.

Anwar, who is serving a five-year jail sentence for sodomy, said that PKR members should "steer clear of the slick schemes of the powerful elites who want to retain an outdated system".

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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

"I am apprehensive, assuming that this strategy is a little overboard and threatens our struggle," he said in the eight-page handwritten bi-lingual letter.

Anwar said that PKR's input for the declaration was only included in the last minute at the insistence of civil society leaders and even then, they were only embellishments.

"In principle, it is a Tun M document, defective and not in line in the context of reform," he said, adding that the document only seemed to focus on the removal of Najib.

Anwar added that his stand was the same when there was an initiative by Gua Musang

MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah to collect signed statutory declarations in their retraction of support for Najib.

He said that in their desperation to change the leadership, they gave their commitment. But that became an embarrassment when Razaleigh himself denied his involvement in it.

Anwar also said while he supported both the Declaration and Statutory Declaration (SD) initiative, he always refrained from using the terms "support" and "commitment".

"Do not be fooled into thinking that the disparaging remarks about Tun M's injustices during his reign will endear him to systemic change," said Anwar, adding that Dr Mahathir was very focused on his agenda.

Anwar also criticised those who have pressured Dr Wan Azizah and Nurul Izzah to meet Dr Mahathir and attend his programmes.

Dr Wan Azizah, who is PKR president, yesterday described the letter as "an internal issue raised by Datuk Seri (Anwar)".

"It's an internal matter and he was just asking them to be careful," she said at Parliament House.