

WILL ANWAR AND AZMIN COMPROMISE?

NST- 2/12/2019 pg. 4

Sources say PKR veep Tian Chua meeting reps from both camps in an effort to reunite party

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TIAN Chua is currently the man of the hour to mend broken ties in the period leading up to PKR's National Congress in Melaka this weekend.

As of now, the PKR vice-president remains busy with meetings in an attempt to mediate between camps siding with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Datuk Seri Azmin Ali.

An old hand in politics, Tian Chua had been among the first to witness the fall of Anwar in Barisan Nasional 20 years ago and helped him reinvent a new multiracial political movement that would forever change the general political psyche.

Tian Chua, who will turn 56 on Dec 21, was not alone in giving birth to PKR when it was known as Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial, or just Adil.

Anwar's protege Azmin was there too, where he remained to safeguard the party following the incarceration of his boss.

Two decades later, things changed with the party's success in the national polls last year.

The run for power, the new political landscape and, perhaps, new cooperation with a former mentor-turned-rival and now a political ally, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, have reshaped the outlook or ambitions of a prominent few.

As of now, Anwar and Azmin are in a heated battle for supremacy, which many still agree centres on the premiership succession. And right in the middle is Tian Chua with a few others working to mend fences.

Three days ago, Tian Chua had met Anwar at an undisclosed time and location, according to a source from the latter's side.

Tian Chua had no qualms expressing his concerns about the warring factions to Anwar, despite he being aligned to Azmin's camp.



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Tian Chua is worried about a possible implosion and relayed his suspicions to Anwar of several "hidden hands" working to exacerbate the divide.

He advised Anwar to look into how the situation, which had earlier cooled down, erupted following the sudden sackings of Zakaria Abdul Hamid from the party central leadership council, as well as Muhamad Mizan Adli Mohd Nor and Mohd Ramly Ahmad from their respective posts as PKR Youth permanent chairman and deputy.

"Tian Chua was right to raise the issues and suspicions. The sackings were too abrupt and somehow childish if you look at the circumstances.

"Someone, or some people, is provoking the camps," said a source.

Tian Chua told Anwar that the apparent move to hold a "parallel congress" here during the party's actual congress in Melaka is, in truth, a form of retaliation by disgruntled Youth members against the spate of sackings.

Anwar only nodded in agreement, with a tinge of worry on his face.

He acknowledged his old friend's concerns and promised to delve into the matter seriously.

Following the meeting, it also appears Anwar's camp had softened its approach and the round of sackings is likely to take a break, with several top leaders, including communications director Fahmi Fadzil and secretary-general Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, announcing that Zakaria would have two weeks to appeal against his dismissal.

This is in contrary to Saifuddin's statement six days ago, when he said neither the president nor the secretary-general had the power to reverse the decision by the central leadership concerning the sacking of party members.

He even said there was no provision in PKR's constitution to rescind such a decision.

If there is any truth about the "meddling", then PKR could be in danger of succumbing to the manipulation of a few who tend to be overzealous in defending their respective camps.

"If the parallel congress indeed takes place, it is most likely that Azmin will form a new party and break away from PKR," said a source.

Observers believe Azmin could leave the party and form his own, although it would result in an awkwardness similar to what had happened in Selangor during the dissolution of Pakatan Rakyat.

But to party insiders, such a view is farfetched.

"It is almost impossible for Azmin to leave PKR. Like it or not, he is one of the founders.

"This party owes its success to him as much as it owes Anwar and (Datuk Seri Dr) Wan Azizah (Wan Ismail).

"Azmin may be rebellious, but he is still like a family member to Anwar. You can say that Azmin will always be Anwar's boy," said a source from Azmin's camp.

If it does indeed go to splitsville, it would affect the ruling party's composition in Parliament.

It is said that Azmin has 15 members of parliament (MPs) on his side, prompting a scenario in

which the Pakatan Harapan-Warisan government would have its majority shaved from 139 to 124, although Parti Warisan Sabah (which has nine MPs) is not a signatory to the succession plan.

In essence, that would be an ineffective rebellion, at least in the short term. It is unlikely that the ruling party would be a half-term government or have its clout reduced due to the minimal number of Azmin's people potentially taking away support from PKR at the parliamentary level.

In the direst of situation, the prime minister would only have to either retain his line-up of a mixed cabinet or simply opt for a reshuffle, due to the number of ministers and their deputies aligned to Azmin or Anwar.

If Azmin's new party materialises, does it have the means to survive and be accepted in PH?

The PH presidential council will likely vote against it.

All in all, due to Anwar's and Azmin's survival instincts, political clout, history and contributions in PKR, it is in their interest to remain in the party to ensure its continuity after two decades of struggles that began from the streets.

"Azmin must also understand that Anwar is the linchpin of the party. The baton will be passed when the time comes. Anwar will remain as the party's uniting factor," said a party insider.

It is believed Tian Chua remains out and about meeting representatives from both factions in his mission to solder or reforge the party's unity. It is obvious that he is thinking about the bigger picture, which is at the end of the day, the durability of the ruling party.