

Anwar: I'm forgiving, but I will protect party

NOT - 8/12/2019 pg-3

MELAKA: PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim reminded party members that although he is forgiving, nothing will stop him from taking action when it comes to safeguarding party interests.

In addressing factionalism in PKR, heightened by incidents of brawls that marred the party's Youth congress on Friday, Anwar said wrongdoers should be punished.

"I am very conciliatory and forgiving... (But) I have also been known to be tough, through measures that are effective. I don't think we should accept this (the brawls). Perpetrators should be sacked.

"This is the consequence of factionalism... hatred for each other," Anwar said at a press conference after delivering his policy speech at the 14th PKR National Congress at the Melaka International Trade Centre.

He was referring to his statement on Friday, pledging to sack party members proven to have been involved in scuffles inside and outside the venue of the PKR Youth congress.

Anwar apologised for Friday's ruckus while speaking before the 4,000 delegates attending the opening of the annual congress.

He said the commotion was not prolonged, and yesterday's violence-free proceedings proved that reconciliation prevailed.

"Today (yesterday), we have seen good developments. Please be kind (to each other), unlike what happened yesterday (Friday)."

Anwar downplayed the existence of two factions in the party — those siding with him and the other with his deputy, Datuk Seri Azmin Ali.

"I do not recognise the two camps. Whatever it is, there is no right or wrong.

"But there is (such a thing as) wrongdoing. In the past, I took a soft approach.

"But based on the messages given by delegates in the congress and based on issues that have been raised, I can see that they want the party to return to its struggle."

Anwar's and Azmin's less than amiable relations had been constantly played down by the top leadership.

Anwar believed that all was well in the party, despite apparent frustration and discontent between the two camps.

The war of words in PKR is believed to have stemmed from

various issues, including over the prime minister's post.

Earlier, Anwar paid tribute to his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, for helming the multiracial party for 20 years.

Anwar, who is Port Dickson member of parliament, congratulated Dr Wan Azizah, who is deputy prime minister, for garnering 50 parliamentary seats for PKR in the last general election.

"It is only appropriate for me to pay tribute to the former president, a woman who has the strongest mind in manoeuvring this vessel in the last two decades.

"Dr Wan Azizah, together with our party friends and the deputy (Azmin), went through many obstacles to establish the party.

"All of us admire her tenacity in leading this party to the point where we now have 50 parliamentary seats."

Since its formation in 1999, PKR had been headed by Dr Wan Azizah, while Azmin has been deputy president since 2010.

Dr Wan Azizah led PKR for two decades after Anwar was thrown behind bars twice for sodomy. During the period Azmin was the key person in strengthening the party and rallying support from other opposition parties at the time to form opposition coalitions.

Azmin was not mentioned in Anwar's speech yesterday. However, he was present at the opening ceremony and sat beside Anwar in the audience.

The two-day 14th PKR National Congress ends today.

Meanwhile, rumours have been circulating about a possible parallel PKR congress being held when news got out that Azmin and several of his allies would attend a "Shared Prosperity Vision Dinner" tonight.

When quizzed by reporters, party vice-president Zuraida Kamaruddin confirmed that she would attend the dinner and it would be hosted by Azmin but she denied that it was a parallel congress.

"It's a dinner. I think it's wrong (to say it is a congress). It's a 'Shared Prosperity Vision dinner."

"We are organising this dinner under Azmin," she said.

Another Azmin-aligned leader, Tian Chua, also confirmed that the dinner was happening tonight.