

**PKR Still Perceived As Weakest Link In Pakatan  
Bernama  
November 25, 2011**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25 (Bernama) -- As over 2,000 delegates and observers of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) gather in Johor for the party's 8th National Congress this weekend, the perception of it being the weakest link in the opposition PKR-DAP-Pas pact remains, at least for now.

Although the issue of defections and resignations from the party by several of its elected representatives and the much-publicised party election fiasco last year have somehow simmered down, political analysts opine that the party is still seen as the weakest link in the opposition pact.

Thus, it is felt that serious efforts are needed for the party to change or at least improve its image.

"The biggest obstacle is the leadership issue and the perception that it is focusing extensively on Malay issues, despite the party being multi-racial," said political analyst Dr Sivamurugan Pandian of Universiti Sains Malaysia.

He said the party was still being hampered by issues, such as the party leadership in Selangor, the internal tussle between deputy president Azmin Ali and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, the unresolved state party leadership issue in Sabah, and the role of current president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

"The main players in the 2008 general election seem to have had a melt down. Forty-three months after the last general election, the perception about PKR has changed from better to worse. It was totally different then compared to now," he noted.

Therefore, he believes the PKR top leadership will use this congress to show that the party and its leaders are united, as the party gears up for the next general election.

However, the weakest link perception will continue to put the party in a less favourable position when it is negotiating with the other partners in the pact for more seats.

"There is another more important issue, that is, what is next for PKR after Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim? Should Anwar be found guilty of the current charges he is facing, who will take over the leadership? Unless they can come out with a leadership plan, the party will continue to be perceived as weak," said Sivamurugan.

PKR being seen as the weakest link in the pact is not something new, as the leadership has acknowledged the problem for some time.

At the party congress in Petaling Jaya last year, the then deputy president, Senator Dr Syed Husin Ali warned party members that the party was the weakest link in the pact, since it was the youngest member, compared to the DAP and Pas.

He explained that three elements were plaguing the party - PKR is a rainbow party

consisting of former members of other political parties who have brought their ideologies to the new party, which now has created friction among members; PKR which touts itself as a multi-racial party, has problems with racist members; and the wealthier members, although small in number, are gaining more power in the party.

In fact, Syed Husin also hit out at PKR parliamentarians and assemblymen for their weak performance.

Another political analyst, Ong Kian Ming from UCSI University, observes that PKR has been unable to remove the perception of it being the weakest link in the pact even though there has been no additional defections from the party.

"The image that the party remains too dependent on Anwar still exists. After the party elections, even some leaders, such as Rafizi Ramli (director of strategy for PKR), have come out on their own, focusing on some national issues, but this is still not enough.

"The party is also facing the lack of good candidates for the next general election, while the emergence of Kita is a direct challenge to PKR. Even if Kita is to contest in the next general election and loses badly, the perception about PKR will still stick," he said.

Political analyst James Chin from Sunway Monash University also believes that PKR is still the weakest link due to the fact that its grassroots organisation is not as strong as that in DAP or Pas.

"PKR is only strong in some urban areas. They are still having problems in establishing themselves. However, people will still vote for them, just because they are part of the opposition pact," he said.

He pointed out that the biggest problem in PKR, however, was still the uncertainty about the party leadership if its de facto leader, Anwar, is sent to jail.

"How are they to select a new leader? Who can hold Pakatan Rakyat together?

"And as for the general election, PKR will have problems negotiating for seats with Pas and DAP, and PKR is most likely to contest in mixed seats, some of which are also vied by DAP and Pas," he said.

Despite this, PKR leaders are still trying hard to reassure their members and supporters, as well as the voters, that they have a succession plan in place but not everyone is convinced, though.

---BERNAMA

Copyright © 2011 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsindex.php?id=629696>