

**Race criterion for top spots never raised, says PKR and DAP**  
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**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11 — PKR and DAP leaders today downplayed PAS's assurance that the country's top two posts will still be held by Muslims should Pakatan Rakyat (PR) assume federal power, saying the matter had yet to be discussed within the pact's national leadership.

But the opposition leaders also said there was an unspoken consensus among the three parties that the prime minister's post would be given to a Muslim PR leader, and stressed that all parties have agreed that PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is the pact's PM-in-waiting.

PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali yesterday moved to assure the party's grassroots that the country's top two leaders will still be Muslim if the federal opposition takes over the government.

The issue was raised at the Islamist party's national meeting after political rivals Umno touched on the viability and captancy of the opposition pact.

"We have never discussed this; it has not reached that level yet," PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution told The Malaysian Insider after attending the PAS Hari Raya open house here near Gombak.

Saifuddin said that while Mustafa's remarks mirrored PAS's objectives and interests, by "convention" the country's prime minister would be a Muslim.

"PAS's points are relevant. A race that encompasses the majority of the country... naturally the Imam should be a Malay-Muslim," he said, referring to Mustafa's remark yesterday.

"Imam, Insya Allah, selamat (the imam, God willing, will be safe)," Mustafa had said then.

The delegates had earlier pressed the PAS central leadership for answers to the question, with one unidentified man demanding to know the identity of the "imam" referred to in Mustafa's comments.

In the party's lingo, "imam" was used a euphemism for the prime minister.

"In this context, the political approach cannot be rigid, static; it has to be dynamic... (anything) can change in the future," said Saifuddin.

DAP national socialist youth chief (Dapsy) Anthony Loke gave The Malaysian Insider a similar response, saying that the race requirement issue for the country's top two posts has yet to reach the PR presidential council level.

Loke said, however, that there was "nothing wrong" for Malay-Muslims to occupy the said posts.

"Although it is not mentioned or discussed, the political reality is that by convention PM post

is always Muslim.

“At the same time, there is nothing to stop us from having more than one deputy prime minister... we do not have to be close-minded,” Loke said.

While the Federal Constitution states that a Malay is also Muslim, it is silent on the ethnic and religious background of the person picked to be prime minister, leaving the matter wholly to the discretion of the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

Fears of a non-Muslim prime minister had first surfaced in May this year following a front-paged news report by Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia titled “Kristian agama rasmi? (Christianity the official religion?)”

The Malay daily had claimed there was a secret plot between the DAP and several pastors to put a Christian in place of a Muslim as PM, which the largely ethnic Chinese party has denied.

DAP leaders have also acknowledged that the current political situation favoured the majority Malays to lead any government. The party has also foregone the opposition leader’s post despite have the most seats among its partners in PR.

There are some 12 million registered voters for the next general election, which must be held by 2013 when the ruling Barisan Nasional’s (BN) mandate expires for the federal government.

PR currently holds four states and 76 federal seats.

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