

Pakatan dispels seat squabble talk, says negotiations done by month's end
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 21 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) moved tonight to dispel talk of squabbling among its state leaders over seat negotiations for the coming polls, announcing that talks should conclude by month's end.

"Sometimes there are differences of opinion over negotiations for parliamentary and state seats but it is normal.

"But it is untrue that negotiations have failed," PR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said after chairing the pact's leadership council meeting here.

He was responding to reports of bickering among PR party members over the allocation of seats between PKR, PAS and DAP, leading to talk of fractures within the pact ahead of the coming polls.

Anwar said every PR state chapter must present its line-up to the pact's central committee by the end of the month, failing which the top leadership would step in to intervene.

PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali revealed that several states have already completed negotiations and submitted their respective line-ups to the PR leadership.

"I cannot say which states have completed them but we have told those who have not to proceed with negotiations.

"If they do not complete them within the stipulated timeframe, the central leadership will step in to resolve the remaining seats in question," he said.

DAP recently demanded PR parties stop publicly airing disagreements regarding seat negotiations, citing concerns that such incidents could affect the relationship between the coalition parties.

DAP national vice chairman Tan Kok Wai said the advice also applied to his own party members, and that PR leaders should abide by the rules and guidelines set by the pact's national leadership regarding the matter.

According to Tan, the PR leadership had drawn up specific guidelines during a recent coalition retreat. PR leaders and members have been ordered to negotiate seat allocations internally and to avoid openly discussing or criticising any coalition partner.

The Malaysian Insider reported on July 20 that PR leaders were confident that negotiations over state and parliamentary seat allocations by PKR, PAS and DAP could be finalised by the end of July, ahead of an anticipated early general election.

It is understood, however, that some states have yet to decide on its seat allocations, causing the issue to remain unresolved.

The recently-concluded Sarawak state election saw PKR and DAP lock horns over several key seats, which resulted in a heavily-publicised row between the leaders of both parties.

Umno has declared it can win back PKR-held seats as the PR linchpin is seen as the weakest link in the opposition pact.

Election 2008 saw PKR become the largest opposition party in Parliament with a total of 31 MPs as BN suffered its worst performance at the polls ever, ceding five state governments and 82 parliamentary seats. PAS, despite being the largest PR party in terms of membership, had the smallest representation in Parliament with only 23 MPs after the polls

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