

Selangor MB: No guarantee PAS will regain Islamic portfolio post-GE13
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By Shannon Teoh

SHAH ALAM, June 2 — Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim has insisted there is no guarantee PAS will regain the Islamic affairs portfolio should Pakatan Rakyat (PR) retain power in Selangor in polls that must be called by March next year.

The Selangor menteri besar added the religious portfolio to a growing list he now shoulders after the incumbent Datuk Hasan Ali was booted from the state executive council (exco) following the latter's sacking from PAS in January.

Khalid's move has been attacked by political foe Umno and its media as well as some PAS leaders who question the Islamist party's credibility and influence in the PKR-led administration as Khalid, a former corporate figure, is not known as a religious teacher.

"No, it is a question of who is the best for the job at the moment," Khalid told The Malaysian Insider in a recent interview.

Khalid (picture) cited "convenience and practical considerations" when another PAS assemblyman, Dr Ahmad Yunus Hairi, was promoted to the state exco to replace Hasan but was not handed the Islamic affairs portfolio.

The MB also denied that the loss of the Islamic affairs portfolio has been a liability for PAS.

He said: "in Islam being in charge of Islamic affairs doesn't make you more Islamic than others."

"The best of Islam is on the other things. It is not on Islamic affairs. If you are a good Muslim, you are in charge of agriculture, your contribution to agriculture is your hallmark of being a good Muslim. I doubt there is an issue," the Ijok assemblyman said.

PAS had submitted three candidates including Dr Ahmad and state PAS chief Rani Osman, who was publicly backed by the party to succeed Hasan.

Dr Ahmad was sworn in instead and handed the youth and sports portfolio, raising concerns of a backlash from Umno and Islamic groups among several state PR leaders who spoke to The Malaysian Insider later.

But Khalid said in the interview that PR was not like the Barisan Nasional (BN) federal coalition that practised a power-sharing system "where the transport minister must come from MCA."

Selangor PR won 36 out of the 56 seats in the state assembly in March 2008 with PKR having 15 assemblymen and PAS winning just eight constituencies.

The Bandar Tun Razak MP also told The Malaysian Insider he would not hold elections before the second half of the year.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak has called on BN to win back the country's richest state "at any cost" and such a victory would help cement his hold on power.

Observers say the prime minister needs to improve on Election 2008, during which BN lost a record 82 federal seats and five state governments and only a return to its customary two-thirds majority of Parliament would guarantee his survival.

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