

Selangor Sultan questions state invite to Anwar for N-Day celeb
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 — The Sultan of Selangor has questioned the state's decision to invite Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to grace an official National Day celebration last week, a Malay daily reported today as controversy grows over the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) government's treatment of the palace.

"His Royal Highness the Sultan finds it strange that in such a programme, Anwar, who is not part of the state government's top leadership, was the guest-of-honour.

"The PKR Opposition Leader also does not hold any official portfolio, except as the appointed State Economic Adviser," Datuk Mohamad Munir Bani, who is private secretary to Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, was reported by Sinar Harian as saying.

"The convention is that if His Royal Highness is unable to attend the state government's official programmes, the Mentri Besar replaces the Sultan to give speeches and so on. But, why was Anwar invited and gave a speech, when this was an official programme, not a political programme?" the palace official told the Malay daily.

Mohamad was previously reported as saying that the Selangor Sultan was not invited or informed of the state-level celebrations.

"Maybe the people will wonder why in an official programme, the Sultan did not appear, but Anwar became the guest of honor and came forward to speak," he was quoted as saying.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had yesterday castigated the PR-led Selangor government for shutting out the state Ruler from its official National Day celebrations at Dataran Shah Alam last Thursday, suggesting that it placed greater importance on Anwar (picture) who was only an economic adviser than the monarch.

"The question of disrespecting the Selangor Sultan does not surprise us... they show more respect to their economic adviser who has no locus standi," he told reporters at the Selangor Umno Adilfitri celebration in Sungai Buloh yesterday as he scoffed at his political nemesis' specially-created position within the state government.

"His Royal Highness is the symbol to the state that we must respect," he said, adding that the Selangor Sultan was a symbol of the state's sovereignty and unity and should be accorded the highest level of respect.

Najib, who is also Umno president, had warned that there the PKR-DAP-PAS opposition bloc would change many things, including the royal institution should it succeed in taking power at the next general elections due soon.

Selangor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim has deflected criticism saying the state countdown to the country's 55th Independence Day last Thursday at Dataran Shah Alam was not politically-motivated.

"This celebration has never been a politically-motivated celebration and has been carried out by government officials from the state secretariat office for several years," Khalid, who is also the PKR treasurer, was quoted as saying in today's New Sunday Times.

Khalid reportedly said that the state had complied with the usual practices in organising such an event.

The weekend edition of the Umno-linked English daily also reported Khalid saying that State Secretary Datuk Mohamad Khusrin Munawi would explain the circumstances in a report.

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