

**Poser over PM pick as Pakatan launches manifesto**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

SHAH ALAM, Feb 25 — A big question mark continues to hang over Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) final choice for the prime minister's post, despite repeated claims by top leaders at the pact's election manifesto launch today that PKR, PAS and DAP are united in their choice for the job.

When approached on the topic of the prime minister's post, not a single leader offered a concrete answer on whether the PR leadership has settled on Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim — or any other candidate — for the position.

PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu was the least evasive on the issue, even admitting to internal strife within his party over the possibility that Anwar will be made PR's prime minister.

"It's normal," he said, when it was pointed out that despite PR's claim of unity, its parties have yet to reach consensus on who should be appointed to the most important executive role in the country.

"Many views... it's not a big problem. It's just like how we select our (party) division chiefs. Insyallah, this is not a big issue," he said.

When pressed to reveal if the pact has at least made its mind up on who should become prime minister but was withholding the decision for strategic reasons, Mohamad first said nothing has been fixed.

But when asked again later, he contradicted himself.

"It has been set. We are just yet to announce it.

"Like before, before contesting in Selangor, we never mentioned (Tan Sri) Khalid Ibrahim's name as menteri besar... but when we won, we looked at the situation and then he was made MB.

"Same thing with taking over Putrajaya... the person who is popular and commands the support will be the PM. No problem, even I could be one," he said and laughed, but later clarified that his name was not on the list.

Mohamad's colleagues, Kuala Selangor MP Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad and PKR deputy president Azmin Ali, were more tight-lipped on the issue.

But despite refusing to confirm if PR has picked its PM candidate, neither men denied that there were disagreements from within the pact over choosing Anwar for the post.

"We will announce as and when we deem it as pertinent and necessary," Dzulkefly said.

"There must be some element of surprise and excitement... these are issues you don't have to worry about. What is needed is the co-operation of PR, and also the people, in ensuring victory," the PAS central working committee member added.

Azmin made a similar statement, but added that the point that must be noted was not on who PR planned to choose as its prime minister but on the pact's readiness for Putrajaya.

He said today's manifesto launch proved the fledgling three-member pact was ready to run the federal government, using common platform policies that he said will look after the country's economy, as well as the education and welfare needs of its people.

"We have a strong leadership in PR. With this package we are bringing to the polls, it shows we are ready to lead the nation... so it is not a question of who is the PM, because we do not want to be seen as too arrogant.

"We will announce at the right time, we cannot reveal everything now," he said.

The Malaysian Insider reported last week that PAS leaders were questioning Anwar's candidacy as prime minister in the event PR wins Election 2013, with one confirming that the party has also queried the possibility of Umno's Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for the top post.

Sources told The Malaysian Insider the questions arose at a recent closed-door meeting between PAS and PKR leaders, after party president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said last Saturday the Islamist party would not hesitate to leave the opposition pact should Islam and Malays lose out in coalition politics.

"PAS top leaders said it was 'haram' (illegal) for Anwar to ask for the prime minister post," a PR source told The Malaysian Insider on condition of anonymity.

"Then a top PKR leader replied that Anwar had never asked for the prime minister post, and that it was the people instead who called for it. This has also been agreed to by PAS and other parties like DAP since the 1999 general election," the source added. The issue of who would be prime minister should PR form the next federal government arose three weeks ago when the PAS Syura Council reportedly rejected Anwar as prime minister and would, instead, appoint an outside candidate for the post.

PAS Syura Council chairman Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat, however, has rubbished the Utusan Malaysia report as an attempt to agitate relations between PAS and PR partners DAP and PKR, according to national news agency Bernama.

DAP chairman Karpal Singh has insisted that Anwar would be PM should PR win Election 2013. Party secretary-general Lim Guan Eng has also done the same, and repeated the message during his speech at today's manifesto launch.

The disagreement between PAS and PKR on who would be prime minister will likely affect PR, although the opposition pact is considered BN's biggest challenger in history.

PAS will contest 70 out of 222 parliamentary seats in Election 2013, which must be called by April, with the rest to be divided between DAP and PKR.

BN lost its customary two-thirds majority and four states to the loose coalition of PAS, PKR and DAP in Election 2008. But the ruling coalition regained Perak after several lawmakers left PR.

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