

**Poser over Perak MB post as Pakatan dithers on Nizar**  
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**BY CLARA CHOOI**

IPOH, April 9 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) strongly believes it can form the next Perak government in Election 2013 but state leaders here are still mulling the choice for menteri besar despite Barisan Nasional's (BN) confidence in keeping the silver state.

The Malaysian Insider understands that while most in the Perak DAP top leadership and some in PAS are still keen on reinstalling Datuk Seri Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin back into the post, others may be eyeing it for themselves, believing the outspoken PAS leader may not be the best candidate this time around.

One Perak PR assemblyman, who refused to be named, said there are those in PAS who feel Nizar should not take on the post, purportedly due to his flagging popularity among the state's more conservative Malays.

But due to Nizar's large following among the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, and Muslim liberals, the assemblyman said Perak DAP is insistent that the 56-year-old first-term assemblyman be returned to the state's helm after Election 2013.

"Still, there is still that issue being played up that Nizar is a DAP stooge... that when he was the MB, he was only at the beck and call of DAP's leaders.

"I heard PAS has problems with him as well... and they have not selected him as MB-designate, although it has been agreed that this will be discussed should Pakatan win Perak again," the assemblyman told The Malaysian Insider

The leader added Perak PKR leaders have also been non-committal about the prospect of appointing Nizar (picture) as menteri besar again, believing that there may be others more suitable for the job.

When met at PAS's headquarters in Medan Istana here last week, state PAS election director Asmuni Awi admitted that there has been "no consensus" yet on the topic of who should be PR's menteri besar choice after the polls.

But while he predicted a definite win for PR in Election 2013, Asmuni told The Malaysian Insider that the matter was still too premature for discussion as PR parties do not want to take their eyes off the prize.

"We have not decided on that yet. No consensus on that yet. But to me, even though I am from PAS, this is a side issue," said Asmuni, who is expected to contest the Manjoi state seat here in Election 2013.

The apparent uncertainty over PR's menteri besar choice appears to suggest the possibility of a tussle for the post after the polls, much like the events after Election 2008 that led to Nizar's appointment.

Nizar, an engineer by training, was lifted to the post of Perak's 10th menteri besar after weeks of debate after the tumultuous polls when opposition parties DAP, PKR and PAS toppled the BN government in Perak.

His appointment had riled certain party leaders in the DAP, largely because he was a member from PAS, the party that had won the least number of state seats in the general election.

By convention, the party that commands the most seats in the state legislative assembly would be the claimant to the post of *mentri besar* but according to the Perak Constitution, the position should be accorded to a person of Malay descent, except by a royal waiver of the Perak palace.

The DAP had scored the highest number of seats at the time, sweeping 18 against PKR's seven and PAS's six. Combined, the three parties formed a minority government with their 31 seats, a mere three-seat majority over BN's 28 seats.

To resolve the impasse, three names were sent to the Perak Sultan for consideration — Datuk Ngeh Koo Ham of the DAP, Nizar and Jamaluddin Mohd Radzi of PKR. Nizar was subsequently chosen.

Nizar was ousted from the position, however, during the 2009 power putsch sparked by the defections of three PR assemblymen that saw the state PR government fall from power after a mere 10-month rule.

When approached on the topic here last week, Nizar said that the general talk is that he would be returned to the post if PR recaptures Perak.

He admitted, however, that PKR has been "50-50" on the matter, while the party's central leadership, including Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim himself, still wants him reinstated.

"But I always tell my counterparts that while this is fine, the whole decision still lies in the hands of the Sultan. The final stage is left in his hands," he said.

Ask if he was ready to take on the post again, Nizar said he was more than ready as his tenure at the helm of the state had been too short a sojourn.

"We believe we can continue all the efforts that we installed at the time... it was so short-lived.

"I believe I still can handle the support of the new leaders in DAP and PKR... because, mind you, when we were leading the government at the time PKR had different leaders... now, they have a new set, with different thinking," he said.

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