

No bipartisan dialogue until BN stops opposition crackdown, PKR leaders say
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PETALING JAYA, May 25 — Several PKR leaders said no today to their deputy president's suggestion for bipartisan engagement with Barisan Nasional (BN), provided the government calls off its security clampdown on opposition supporters and stops issuing racial remarks.

Noting that Azmin Ali's (pic) proposal had not been discussed by the party leadership, PKR secretary-general Datuk Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said such engagement was only possible if the environment was "conducive", appearing to blame BN for rendering such efforts difficult.

"If I am asked for (my) opinion, any engagement process has to start against a backdrop that is conducive," Saifuddin told reporters on the sidelines of PKR's 9th national congress here this afternoon.

Saifuddin also listed down a few examples of events that did not present a "conducive" environment for engagement between BN and PR.

"There can't be engagement efforts while a series of arrests is carried out, there can't be engagement efforts if the situation is not conducive such as political attacks with racial tones - 'Chinese tsunami' and so on.

"There can't be engagement process if the ruling party or its leadership still speaks with racial tones such as suggesting that ethnic identity be destroyed, that Chinese and Tamil schools be ditamatkan (ended)," the PKR secretary-general said.

In his speech yesterday, Azmin urged for an end to the apparent political impasse that has arisen over the results of the just-concluded polls, saying there was a need for all parties to reach common ground through bipartisan engagement and dialogue.

While noting PKR's indignation at BN's return to power despite scoring the minority vote, Azmin said the people's welfare should be prioritised above partisan politics.

He stopped short, however, of urging an end to the series of "Black 505" rallies nationwide, saying organising or attending peaceful assemblies is the constitutional right of every Malaysian citizen.

"If we declare our intention to serve the people, to show patriotism... then we need to seek common ground to bring political development to Malaysia," he said in his speech at the opening of the PKR Youth and Wanita wings 9th national congress here.

"It is our responsibility not to allow the 51-47 atmosphere lead us to a stalemate or political impasse... unending disputes and conflict," he said, referring to the popular vote score between BN and PR at the polls.

"I think all parties need to have the moral courage to create political dialogue and engagement across the political divide," he said.

But Wanita PKR chief Zuraida Kamaruddin stood with Saifuddin on the matter, agreeing that

that the BN government's crackdown on opposition supporters and issues with racial tones have to be stopped first before bipartisan engagement can take place.

PKR strategic director Rafizi Ramli also concurred with Saifuddin's view.

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