

PKR continues to defend 'Kajang move', says good for electoral democracy

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The use of elections to obtain political advantage strengthens electoral democracy, said PKR in justifying the so-called "Kajang move" which will see its top leader contesting for a state seat.

Its vice-president N. Surendran hit out at criticisms of the plan as "poorly reasoned", saying critics lacked an understanding of party and electoral politics.

"Elections are the bedrock of the political strategy of parties in any modern democracy.

"It is the right of the political party to go back to the people as part of a political strategy, whether in a by-election or wider national elections," said the Padang Serai MP.

On Monday, PKR's Lee Chin Cheh resigned as the Kajang state assemblyman, and immediately fuelled speculation of Anwar taking over the Menteri Besar post from Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim.

The move has however not sat well with the public, with many saying it was a waste of public funds to force a by-election in order to deal with the rivalry between Khalid and Selangor PKR chief Azmin Ali.

But PKR has been defending the Kajang move as a "tactical move" to fortify Selangor and make it a launchpad for Pakatan Rakyat to take over Putrajaya.

Surendran (pic) argued that forcing by-elections has been a practice in "mature democracies", citing the example of British MP David Davis who in 2008 resigned from the House of Commons to force a by-election in order to focus on civil liberties.

"Contrary to what the critics say, there is nothing underhanded or dirty in forcing a by-election as a political strategy.

"Those who lament over the costs of the by-election fail to understand that there are unavoidable costs inherent in a functioning democracy. Their focus should be on clean elections, and not a cheap democracy."

He went on to say that the use of elections as a political strategy should be "nurtured and encouraged" as it was a "superb way" for the people to have their say and this, according to Surendran, would strengthen the spirit democracy.

"Pakatan Rakyat wants to gain strength through the legitimate use of the electoral system; this in contrast to the BN which undermines elections, and uses executive power to oppress and persecute dissent in order to hold on to power," he added, citing Article 51 of the Federal Constitution which allowed elected reps to resign without conditions or qualifications.

"The critics appear to have lost sight of the words and spirit of the Federal Constitution which contemplates and allows for situations like this. Article 51 is worded in order to permit by-elections as a political strategy

"This is also a political strategy to help beat the corrupt and oppressive BN coalition, and consign them eventually to the trash heap of history," he added. – February 1, 2014.

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