

Pakatan must tackle Selangor storm first, says Anwar
Malaysian Insider
Feb 2, 2014
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Pakatan Rakyat cannot talk about being an alternative government if it fails to weather the current "storm" in Selangor, says the opposition leader.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said last night that in recent months the state had come under "attack" on several issues which had tested its leadership.

Anwar was referring to the "Allah" issue, the Selangor Islamic Religious Department's raid on the Bible Society of Malaysia premises in which 320 Malay and Iban Bibles were confiscated on January 2, and the water issue, among others.

"Although the Selangor government is administered well economically, the church and Bible problem is a huge one in Selangor, so I have to assist to resolve the matter," he said at a press conference in Penanti last night after meeting more than

500 locals at Yayasan An Nahdhoh in Kubang Semang, Permatang Pauh, about the "Kajang move".

"We are talking about good governance and economic management but those who underestimate the need for a political force for Pakatan Rakyat are grossly mistaken.

"We cannot talk about an alternative government without the capability to show and prove that we can weather the storm."

Anwar said the party's strategy was critical at this point as Selangor had moved beyond just being an efficient state with impressive economic growth.

Selangor has to be the model Pakatan Rakyat state that can withstand the incessant propaganda and continuous pressure from Putrajaya.

"There had been many programmes that were delayed or even derailed. Like the water issue, Khalid (Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim) had done all in his power but he was getting nowhere. It is the same with other matters under federal authority.

"Khalid has been able to function effectively in some areas but there are matters that are beyond his capability."

Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili recently announced that Putrajaya was fine-tuning the details for a joint takeover of four water concessionaires in Selangor and that the deal could be concluded soon, which may mark the end of the state's lingering water problems.

Ongkili said Selangor had also expressed its support to the federal government's idea for a new water treatment plant, the Langat 2.

Khalid had said the state and federal governments would be taking over the four water management companies under Section 114 of the Water Services Industry Act 2006.

Last night, Anwar again skirted the issue when asked if he would be replacing Khalid as menteri besar and said the state seat had to be won first.

He also said it was inappropriate to link the sultan with the matter.

"It is unfair to prejudge the sultan in such matters. It is unfair for people to talk. The law is clear," he said.

On how he will manage his duties as Permatang Pauh MP in Penang and an assemblyman in Selangor should he win, he said this was being made an 'issue' simply because he was Anwar.

"So far, it is not a problem if you are an MP from Sarawak or Sabah.

"It is a problem because I am Anwar. MPs from Sarawak and Sabah are not Anwar," he said, adding that Penang was about 40 minutes away from Kuala Lumpur by flight.

Anwar touched on the negative public opinion regarding the Kajang by-election and his candidacy. He said it was understandable for the people to raise questions and concerns in the absence of a clear explanation of what happened.

He said the party would respond to the people with some patience but they were expecting their political rivals to hit them hard.

"Umno will be very vicious and they have started, as we know. The people will anticipate this, too. There is Anwar-phobia," he said, adding that Barisan Nasional-controlled media organisations were all out to attack him.

PKR's Lee Chin Cheh resigned as Kajang assemblyman last Monday and Anwar was announced as the candidate for the yet-to-be-announced by-election the next day.

His candidacy fuelled speculation that Anwar was looking to take over as Selangor menteri besar to solve rivalry problems between Khalid and Selangor PKR chief and Bukit Antarabangsa assemblyman Azmin Ali. – February 2, 2014.

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Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pakatan-must-tackle-selangor-storm-first-says-anwar>