

PKR, DAP insist Pakatan intact despite PAS's defiance over Selangor MB impasse

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PAS remains at odds with its Pakatan Rakyat (PR) allies over the new Selangor menteri besar but both PKR and DAP are downplaying the damage wrought with claims that it is all "part of the democratic process", to the chagrin of political analysts.

The Islamist party's wish to to nominate at least two candidates to replace Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim has brought into question PR's viability as PKR and DAP insist on only naming PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail for the top state job.

"This is a democracy, what. What do you want to expect?" PKR vice-president Tian Chua told The Malaysian Insider when asked about the sharp difference of opinion among the three parties.

"That is how consultation works. We expect differences, then we have to reach a common point of view."

PAS reiterated on Wednesday that it would submit two names for the Selangor menteri besar post to the state ruler, going against the PR presidential council's decision to only nominate Dr Wan Azizah.

The Islamist party had justified snubbing its allies by stating they were simply abiding by the sultan's decree that each party in PR submit three names to the palace.

But PKR and DAP had explained that its decision followed the practice last year when the pact had submitted only one name to the palace without a hitch.

When asked to comment, Tian Chua brushed the matter aside by describing it as "no major contradiction".

He said the Islamist party "only" diverted from the coalition when it proposed an extra name for the menteri besar position.

"PAS respects the PR consensus that Selangor will be led by PKR. They agreed Dr Wan Azizah should be a candidate, they expressed that they will stay with PR, and Khalid must go," he said.

"All these are common points, so why do we want to talk about the end of Pakatan?"

DAP national organising secretary Anthony Loke similarly denied PR would break up over PAS's continued disregard for the PR consensus.

"It has not come to that yet. Let us settle the issues one by one. Right now we are focused on the Selangor menteri besar issue," he told The Malaysian Insider.

PKR de facto chief Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had also insisted that the spirit of PR was still strong, despite the "perceived" inability to reach a consensus.

"It's a bit premature to say that (it is the end of the PR Selangor government) because the general consensus and feelings of supporters of PAS, PKR and DAP are to make sure PR continues to be formidable," he told reporters on Thursday.

However, analysts have painted a starkly different picture of the coalition – one that is damaged by betrayal and distrust.

Political analyst Professor James Chin of Monash University told The Malaysian Insider that while the PR government in Selangor was still intact, it was not the same as it used to be.

"The distrust is already there. They can never get back to normal. They still have a working relationship, but not as close as before. The relationship will be really sour."

He added that the pact could very well disintegrate at the state level if Dr Wan Azizah was not appointed the Selangor menteri besar.

"If (Dr) Wan Azizah doesn't become menteri besar, DAP and PKR will break down at the state level. And there's a possibility that PAS Selangor will withdraw and become middlebenchers," he said.

Ibrahim Suffian, who heads independent pollster Merdeka Center, said PAS's insistence to nominate two names would "definitely create further tension" in the coalition.

"It is as if the party has gone back on its own word and decided to go it alone.

"This creates a problem in the state government, because for all intents and purposes, only 13 of PAS's assemblymen are standing with them.

"The rest have gone with PKR and DAP," said Ibrahim.

Ibrahim was referring to the two PAS assemblymen who had declared their support for Dr Wan Azizah ahead of the Islamist party's August 17 meeting to decide on the menteri besar post.

The August 25 central committee meeting also saw the 13 PAS assemblymen rebel against their president, Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Hadi Awang, who insisted that two names should be submitted to the sultan.

"However, this crisis does not quite spell the end of Pakatan Rakyat's government. The menteri besar issue will still be the subject of negotiation.

"They will still have to work together and see why PAS is so insistent in this case," said Ibrahim.

Independent analyst Khoo Kay Peng, however, was less optimistic, saying PAS's continued defiance would finish off PR at the state and national level.

"Coalition partners have to give and take, but PAS has obviously not done that.

"PR as a three-party coalition cannot work. Hard core DAP and PKR supporters from DAP and PKR won't give the same support, knowing they have been betrayed by PAS."

He added that if the PAS leadership was not changed, PKR and DAP would be forced to work without the Islamist party and ultimately become "fringe parties" only capable of winning urban seats. – August 29, 2014.

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