

How a fickle PAS spells trouble beyond the Selangor MB impasse
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PAS's fickle actions throughout the Selangor Menteri Besar impasse will not have any impact on who finally gets chosen for that top post in the country's wealthiest state, say PKR leaders, who believe they have the numbers to back their choice.

The big impact, they said, would be about the Islamist party's potentially bleak future in Pakatan Rakyat (PR) if it fails to get its house in order.

More importantly, said a political analyst, if PAS continues to act the way it has, the party will have an increasingly tough time getting its representatives elected into public office.

Why PAS's actions are irrelevant

Ever since the Menteri Besar saga started in late July when Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim was sacked from PKR, PAS leaders have taken a number of positions that have left its allies in PKR and DAP scratching their heads.

At first, the PAS central committee promised to nominate two people from PKR as Menteri Besar candidates, and named PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and her deputy Azmin Ali.

But now it has emerged that PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang had disregarded his party's decision and instead nominated three other candidates, and nobody from his party's original list.

Throughout the entire saga, DAP and PKR have stuck to their original positions and nominated only Dr Wan Azizah.

But the media's obsession with the twists and turns in this crisis and PAS's antics are, said PKR vice-president Tian Chua, a "distraction" and "irrelevant".

He said this was because the Selangor Constitution specifies that the Ruler must appoint someone who commands the confidence of the majority of members in the Selangor legislature.

And that person is not from PAS but from PKR.

"We have provided documents to prove that Dr Wan Azizah has the support of a majority in the assembly," Tian Chua said, referring to statutory declarations made by 30 assemblymen who want Wan Azizah to be menteri besar.

"I believe that the Selangor Sultan will follow the constitution and choose the person who has majority support in the assembly," said Tian Chua, who is also the Batu MP.

Another senior PKR leader said it had always been the practice of political parties in Malaysia to submit one candidate to a ruler.

"No one knows this better than the Barisan Nasional and Umno. They've always agreed and submitted one person. This has always been their practice," said the PKR leader who requested anonymity.

Nominating only one candidate, this leader said, was in keeping with the Westminster style of parliamentary democracy – the party that was elected by the public into government determines who becomes prime minister or menteri besar.

Why PAS's actions are relevant

Another PKR leader claimed that what was relevant in PAS's actions in the past few weeks was that it showed how intractable its leadership crisis has become.

Just like in the Kelantan hudud bill issue in April, where PAS broke ranks with its PR partners, its recent behaviour in this crisis was about the ongoing feud between its pro-PR and Umno-friendly factions.

A determining factor as to which side will prevail in the end will be the PAS grassroots.

"I am fully confident that the PAS grassroots want to be with Pakatan. They cannot contemplate going to bed with Umno. If the pro-Umno faction in PAS kicks out leaders who are pro-PR, they will have to face the ire of their grassroots," said the PKR leader.

Beyond the question of PAS's relations and how it will function within PR, is the fact that its behaviour was unbecoming of a modern political party, said political scientist Dr Wong Chin Huat.

"Predictability is necessary for modern politics and political parties. Citizens and the market need a sense of security that they can expect a political party to behave the way it says it will behave."

A political party in power that makes flip-flop decisions would be catastrophic.

"How Hadi has allowed PAS to become unpredictable is worse than if PAS just stuck to becoming conservative and rigid, because then it would still be predictable," said Wong, a fellow of the Penang Institute.

PAS's inconsistent behaviour has far-reaching implications beyond whether it will remain with the PR.

Even if it could rule on its own, it would still be bad, Wong said.

Businesses would not be able to decide whether it can expect state policy to stay the same and citizens can't decide whether the promises PAS makes today will be held up tomorrow.

"The concept of predictability relates to an even older concept called trust. It's hard to trust an unpredictable political party," Wong said. – September 7, 2014.

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