

In Azmin Ali, DAP sees a new hope and brighter future
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BY ANISAH SHUKRY

Even as Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim faces a possible future behind bars, DAP's fundraising dinner last night was full of cheer as leaders of the opposition party heralded a "new chapter" and "new hope" for Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

This hope was embodied in the new Selangor menteri besar and PKR deputy president, Mohamed Azmin Ali, whom DAP leaders said would bring the state and the opposition pact to greater heights after "nine months of turmoil" since the Kajang Move was announced.

"We've got a new menteri besar that is supported by all three parties in PR. We have high hopes for a fresh beginning," said DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng at the dinner, which carried the theme "New Chapter, New Hope".

Lim told some 1,000 DAP supporters at the MBPJ Civic Centre that Azmin's handling of the seized Malay and Iban-language Bible issue, in particular, would go a long way to rebuild the confidence of the people in PR.

The Penang chief minister also proposed that Penang and Selangor work together to become model PR states.

"I suggest that we instruct our executive council members to publicly declare their assets. If Azmin agrees, we can do it together... With Penang and Selangor taking the lead, BN has no hope of taking back Selangor," said Lim.

DAP Bukit Gasing assemblyman Rajiv Rishyakaran said in his speech that he was proud to stand with the new menteri besar, whom he said was "setting a new hope and new direction".

"I am proud to be part of this new government. I see a big change, even though it is only 43 days of his administration," he said.

Rajiv said one of these changes was the menteri besar's accessibility, adding that before last month, he had never stepped into the menteri besar's office.

"In the last one month, I've stepped into Azmin's office two times. Consultation at this juncture is very important," he said.

One of PKR's chief complaints about former Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim was the latter's tendency to make decisions without consulting others.

The party's issues with Khalid led to the Kajang Move – a plan initiated in January to

replace Khalid with PKR de facto leader Anwar as the new menteri besar of Selangor.

But PKR's plans were foiled when Anwar was sentenced to prison for sodomy by the Court of Appeal on March 7, while its second choice for the post, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, also fell through as she did not receive the Selangor Sultan's consent.

Selangor Menteri Besar Azmin Ali, among others, says he wants to solve the problem of uncollected garbage. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Afif Raiezal, November 4, 2014. Selangor Menteri Besar Azmin Ali, among others, says he wants to solve the problem of uncollected garbage. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Afif Raiezal, November 4, 2014. Instead, PKR deputy president Azmin was sworn in as the 15th Selangor menteri besar on September 23, even though neither his party nor his coalition had initially nominated him.

In spite of the circumstances which led to his appointment, Azmin last night won over the crowd with his pledge to resolve the long-standing issues plaguing the nation's richest state.

He vowed to continue pressing the federal government into disclosing the water deal it had inked with Khalid's administration; to defend the rights of the Christians whose Bibles had been seized in January; to promote economic growth in Selangor; and to solve the problems of uncollected garbage and roads ridden with potholes in the state.

In a style reminiscent of newly-elected Indonesian President Jokowi Widodo, the new menteri besar even gave his mobile phone number to the delighted hall and told them to contact him if their garbage remained uncollected.

"I want Petaling Jaya to be the cleanest district in Selangor. If you see any garbage that has not been collected, you text me. I'm serious about it. I will not tolerate garbage. I want it all to be cleaned up," said Azmin.

He shrugged off comparisons to Jokowi, however, saying that he was not concerned about "style" and wished to keep his leadership simple.

"I will spend 20% of my time in office, while the other 80% will be spent on the ground to meet the people and understand their suffering.

"I have to address some of the long-standing and recurring issues. First is potholes. You can't have a state that claims to have billions of ringgit in reserves, yet when you exit your house, boom, you fall into a pothole," he said, drawing laughter from the crowd.

However, he conceded that he was still new and a "freshie", and had much to learn from his peers as he set out to resolve all the problems in Selangor.

"With all humility I must accept I don't have all the answers. But with the courage and

support of the rakyat, God willing, we will do our utmost to defend the rights of all citizens in Selangor and Malaysia.

"We look at the theme (for the dinner): New chapter, New hope... our new MB," quipped Azmin, to laughter and applause from the audience.

Last Saturday, The Economist had said that if Anwar were to lose his sodomy appeal at the Federal Court, it would give Azmin the chance to step into the limelight.

"He cut his teeth as Anwar's private secretary during his years in government and has proven a loyal deputy. But the capable 50-year-old can readily move out from his mentor's shadow," the Economist had said. – November 4, 2014.

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