

Democracy and PKR's dynasty

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Like many other political parties, PKR is dynastic. This restricts the level of internal democracy of the party, particularly on its decision-making process.

Political dynasty reveals the factional conflicts within PKR and it is an essential “tool” to keep the party together.

Barely a month after Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail replaced Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the Kajang by-election, we are now witnessing a straight fight between the husband and wife for PKR presidency.

This has given rise to differing views about internal democracy and dynastic politics within the party itself.

Azmin Ali, Anwar's right hand man who was said to have eyed the president's post, decided to defend his deputy presidency. Back in 2012, in an interview with an online news portal, Azmin openly spoke against dynastic politics in PKR.

In the long run, family ties in the party will affect the legitimacy of PKR as a political party.

The 13th general election is coming to a year in another month's time. Despite winning more popular votes compared to the Barisan Nasional (BN), Pakatan Rakyat (PR) has yet to prove to the people its capability and credibility.

Instead, problems after problems occur. One of the most apparent issues is PKR's power struggles.

The spat between Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim and Azmin reached a climax, revealing the internal power struggle in the party.

The perception of PKR being a husband-and-wife-daughter dynasty is getting even stronger.

The reign of political families, even if legitimised by elections, goes against the idea of democracy.

Very often, dynastic politics lessen access to political power among those who do not have the privilege of politically connected families and the wealth that often comes with them.

The youth vote is growing massively and changing the dynamics of elections. If PKR or the PR want to expand its electoral support, it must then first eliminate dynastic politics.

At the same time, it also needs to inspire the multi-ethnic electorate to maintain the support it has gained in the 2013 general election.

From time to time, there is a segment of the population becomes disillusioned with the opposition over several issues.

Dynastic politics and internal struggles are keeping PR from winning confidence of the Malaysian public, who are now a better judge on Malaysian politics.

PKR, with its image as a multi-ethnic political party, urgently needs good strategists whose opinions are taken seriously. It has to move away from being a one-man crusade. This is crucial because the party has to seriously consider the sustainability issue once Anwar is no longer there.

Hence, the chain of command and the future leadership of this party have to be developed. By putting himself outside the chain, Anwar will eventually allow the party leadership to move up to another level.

Anwar is a crucial icon for the PKR, but the party must also realise that a new generation of Malaysians are looking new idealism and alternatives. They want new blood.

It is these generational contexts that will eventually give significance to the changes going on in Malaysia.

While Lembah Pantai Member of Parliament and PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah is seen as the dynastic heir to his father, her time to lead the party may still be a while off. Moreover, her credibility to lead a party is still a big question mark.

Many put high hopes on the PKR as the political party too ultimately bring reforms to Malaysia, partly due to its multi-ethnic approach. However, the manner in which party elections and internal feuds were handled is worrying.

At the end of the day, the challenge to dynasty will need to come from within the party itself, and not external factors. – March 31, 2014.

** This is the personal opinion of the writer or publication and does not necessarily represent the views of The Malaysian Insider.*
