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Questions abound over Keadilan's formation

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NOT all questions relating to politics can be answered with total clarity. And so it was when Parti Keadilan Nasional was launched last week and answers given to ten questions prepared by the party itself in a Q & A pamphlet.

Certainly revealing was the response to a question to why it was formed when there are other opposition parties already in existence, namely Pas, DAP, PBS and Parti Rakyat Malaya.

The first reason given was that Keadilan would become the channel for thousands of ordinary Umno members and hundreds of thousands of Malaysians who are not members of any political party.

The second reason given was that if the opposition wishes to become a credible alternative, its members must prove that they can form a strong and lasting confederation.

Keadilan is hopeful that it can help them unite and establish an intra-party movement fighting for justice and reformasi.

With the first reason in mind - Keadilan as the channel for thousands of ordinary Umno members - there is then the response to question No 6: Would not Keadilan be seen as a splinter party like Semangat Melayu 46?

The answer: Keadilan is different, its leadership is not from the Umno hierarchy. There is not one Umno leader at the national level in the Keadilan Supreme Council.

Mentioned too was the establishment later of divisions and branches at State level as the set-up is in Umno.

The party president is similarly empowered to appoint the secretary-general, treasurer and information chief.

Worthy of mention are other questions and answers - ten in all. Some excerpts.:

Q: Would not Keadilan be regarded as a rival by the opposition?

A: There is no reason for the opposition to regard Keadilan as a threat.

Indeed opposition parties should accept it in good stead since it would be "strengthening the opposition by bringing in large numbers of Malays, Chinese and Indians, hitherto on the side of the status quo and Barisan Nasional.

It must be remembered also that the reformasi movement and Adil had openly chosen to cooperate closely with Pas, DAP and PRM.

Q: Since Keadilan is cooperating with the opposition does that mean it has no links at all with Umno and Barisan Nasional?

A: As already mentioned, "many Umno members are sympathetic to our struggle. Indeed even in component parties of the Barisan Nasional there are groups supportive of us".

Q: Since the aspirations of Keadilan are similar to the original objectives of Umno and the Barisan Nasional would not its formation further break Malay unity?

A: By persuading Umno members to return to their original struggle, Keadilan is paving the way for the unity of the Malays and indeed all Malaysians, based on high values and moral standards.

Q: Why has Keadilan chosen to be a multi-ethnic party?

A: Keadilan's multi-ethnic approach is different from the multi-ethnic efforts pursued by various political parties in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

"Keadilan takes into consideration Malaysia's history. It realises that Malaysia's multi-ethnicity which has developed now is the result of Malay

unity ... the essence of Keadilan is Melayu and Malay leadership."

Elaborated was the party's aim to cooperate with Non-Government Organisations such as Adil and the Justice Movement formed earlier.

"Close links between a political party and the social movement is not something new.

"Thus were links evolved between Masjumi and the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesia in the 40s and 50s. The Labour Party in the UK and the Fabian Socialists too had such links ..."

The most important question was reserved for the last, No 10.

Why is Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, former Deputy Prime Minister not a member of Keadilan?

The answer: At this juncture Anwar has decided to take this stance so as to enable him to concentrate in the arduous task of bringing together the political parties and NGOs to fight for social reformasi and social justice ...

At the same time Anwar's name would continue to be linked with Keadilan. His ideas have helped to shape this party.

His wife Wan Azizah leads the party as desired by his many friends and supporters. Keadilan is the dominant channel for Anwar's political struggle.

If Anwar is found guilty and jailed he would continue to be the main source of inspiration and the spirit in guiding Keadilan.

Other questions are posed from the answers given such as the claim of support from ordinary Umno members.

As already noted, Harakah, the official organ of Pas has in the past given prominence to reports of Umno members said to have joined the party and that certain Umno branches had been voluntarily dissolved.

Party President Fadil Noor had also mentioned in the course of the recent Sabah State election that some 70,000 have joined the party.

Would there be a contest of sorts then between Pas and Keadilan in the chase to rope in Umno members?

Are Umno members really leaving the party in droves as claimed and reported?

And would any Umno member of Parliament or State Assemblyman now cross the floor to join Keadilan?

An electoral pact there would have to be between Keadilan and other opposition parties for the coming Parliament and State elections.

Where then would certain party leaders such as Dr Chandra Muzafar, Irene Fernandez (of Tenaganita) and Zainur Zakaria from the Bar Council contest, should they enter the fray?

Reported earlier in the Malay media was speculation that Wan Azizah might be contesting in Kubang Pasu against Prime Minister Dari Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Would Pas leaders then be on the hustings for her when the party itself is not nominating women candidates on ideological grounds?

As Jocelyn Tan, covering the political scene wrote the other day:

"At closed-door meetings, Pas leaders are talking about forming the Government by the year 2005 ... could the splitting of Malay votes between Umno, Pas and Keadilan then have an effect on the party's ultimate goal?

In the party's scheme of things, its leaders do not have Wan Azizah ala Benazir Bhutto in mind as the next Prime Minister. Nor Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim himself.

Questions, therefore abound and there are no easy answers no matter how rhetorically worded.

Just say "reformasi" aloud and coming to mind immediately are scenes of the anti-Chinese havoc unleashed by Indonesian reformasi elements.

For the moment thousands of Pas flags are fluttering throughout Perlis.

Having lost in Sabah recently, Pas is returning to the Malay heartland,
one by one.

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