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Hadi must prove himself among ulama, says Chandra

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Pas acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang is faced with two major challenges - an internal one and Barisan Alternatif - to ascertain his strength in the party.

Former Parti Keadilan Nasional deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar today said Hadi's ability to communicate with the ulama and professionals within the party had yet to be proved.

"Ever since Pas was established, it was (the late) Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor who was able to establish a line of communication with the party ulama and professionals besides effectively interacting with them."

Hadi had very little to do with them so this was definitely a challenge for him, in addition to interacting with the opposition front.

"Since Pas plays a very important role in the BA, Hadi has to make sure of its success by communicating and understanding their aspirations and needs," he added.

Hadi, who is the Menteri Besar of Terengganu, became the acting president after Pas president and opposition leader Fadzil, 65, died on June 23 in the Intensive Care Unit of Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in Cheras.

Chandra said it was not that Hadi was incapable of facing these two challenges, but rather whether he could communicate effectively.

Chandra, who is president of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST) said Hadi needed also to understand that for Pas to gain popularity "the party has to convince the people that it has their interest at heart. But this they have not been able to do, especially with many Muslims within and outside the party and non-Muslims opposing the Hudud."

Despite protests from several quarters, Hadi announced his intention to table the Syariah Criminal Enactment Bill, which includes the controversial provisions on hudud, on July 7 to 9.

On major changes in Pas policy under Hadi, Chandra said, he did not foresee any as Hadi and Fadzil subscribed to the basic tenets of Pas' struggle.

"Both are committed to an Islamic state, the hudud, and various rules pertaining to women," he said. Hadi was more in tune with party ideologues who emphasised the idea of the Islamic state, laws and rules.

Hadi was less concerned with the political terrain and more with ensuring the success of Islamic ideology.

On the by-elections to be held in Pendang and Anak Bukit, Chandra said it would be a tough fight.

On the transition from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, he said there had been achievements and shortcomings during Dr Mahathir's 21-year tenure, like any other leader.

But what Malaysians hoped for was that Abdullah would ensure more democratic space, a move towards greater unity among different communities and an equitable distribution of wealth in the country.

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