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Two-faced politicians part of game

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The old cliché of politicians speaking out of two faces with forked tongues keeps being proved as being part of the game.

Take, for example, Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan, the now "partyless" assemblyman for Bingkor in Sabah.

He was a member of Parti Bersatu Sabah and state assemblyman for Bingkor when he left to form Parti Bersatu Demokratik Sabah, ostensibly because he wanted to mend ties with the Barisan Nasional as the PBS was no longer in the coalition.

But when PBDS' registration was turned down, Jeffrey joined coalition component Akar Bersatu.

For his pains, he was made a Senator and Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister in the Federal Cabinet.

In 1997, however, he rejoined PBS, which was still in the Opposition, and regained his Bingkor state seat in the 1999 state election.

He left the PBS again on April 23, 2000, to join Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) along with five other opposition PBS assemblymen: Louis Rampas (Kiulu), Edward Linggu Bukut (Tamparuli), Johnny Goh Chin Lok (Inanam), Karim Adam (Kundasang) and Atong Mangabis (Matunggong).

Then he got embroiled in a tussle for the PBRS presidency with Tan Sri Joseph Kurup, when both were elected as president at the party's seventh annual Congress in early 2002, and ended up leaving the PBRS.

Since then, Jeffrey has been associated with Umno, the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Organisation (UPKO), and even PBS again.

Yesterday, it was reported that Jeffrey would be leading the "Sabah Alliance" of three Sabah opposition parties and a group of independents seeking to prevent a clean sweep by the BN in the State.

The three parties are Parti Barisan Rakyat Sabah Bersekutu (Bersekutu), Parti Demokratik Setiasehati Kuasa Rakyat Bersatu Sabah (Setia) and United Pasok Nunuk Ragang National Organisation (Pasok).

Whatever became of Jeffrey Kitingan's noble intention to mend fences with the BN is anyone's guess.

Shahnon Ahmad, Pas MP for Sik in Kedah, seems to find it extremely difficult to make up his mind.

The national laureate suffers from poor health, and has often announced his retirement from politics.

In June 2000 he told this newspaper: "It is meaningless for me to hold on to the post when I cannot work, and even now I am finding it difficult. I cannot talk for long. I get tired."

Now he denies he was ever going to retire then.

Acclaimed for his novels on the plight of the Malay peasantry, in classics such as Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan, and shocking everyone with his scathing political satires in Shit and Vomit, Shahnon made another aboutturn yesterday.

He wants to defend his seat.

"Although I am not feeling well," he said, coughing badly, "I hope our leadership will give me another chance."

The DAP, too, has gone back on its word.

Just last week, the DAP's Batu Gajah MP Fong Po Kuan decided to defend her seat after announcing last year that she would not.

Fong, who at 26 became the youngest MP after her victory in the 1999 general election, said she would put her self-interest aside and seek

reelection, as she did not want to be a bystander while the country was facing many challenges.

But then, the DAP is known for the conflicting statements of its leaders.

On May 11, 2002, DAP national publicity bureau secretary Gobind Singh Deo said the people should reject Pas if it continued to deny multi-culturalism in Malaysia.

The very next day, party deputy chairman Karpal Singh said although the DAP objected to the setting-up of an Islamic state, the party was willing to work with Pas against Barisan Nasional on "broader and significant issues that affect the people".

The DAP left the Alternative Front in Sept 2001.

When former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that long-serving politicians should make way for new faces, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, who had several times since 1997 indicated his desire to retire, openly agreed.

However, his party members strongly felt Dr Lim still had a lot to offer to Gerakan and the BN.

Many senior leaders in the BN declared their agreement with Dr Mahathir, who himself kept his word and retired gracefully on Oct 31 last year.

And there is Pas.

Election Commission chairman Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman last week reminded political parties that promising "tickets to heaven" for votes was an offence.

Pas was known to have resorted to such tactics in the past, but party secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa claimed Pas had never done any such thing.

Just a few days later, Pas spiritual adviser and Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat said the party would continue to use the tactic until nomination day.

Yesterday, Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said the party's manifesto had been drawn up with Keadilan and outlined the general principles accepted by all parties. "If (Pas) wins the most number of seats," Hadi said, "we will form an Islamic state."

But Keadilan does not support this.

Last November, Keadilan and partner Parti Rakyat Malaysia had said that the term "Islamic state" would continue to raise misunderstandings and unnecessary fear, especially among non-Muslims.

In a joint statement, Keadilan president Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and PRM president Dr Syed Husin Ali said: "We believe the launching of the document is neither appropriate nor timely especially with the general election coming soon."

So has Keadilan gone back on its word not to support Pas' Islamic state idea? Or is this another instance of words of mass distraction?

We have another recent about turn from Pas.