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Umno members' resolve may spell trouble for Pas

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WHILE Umno members attending this year's general assembly attempt to imagine what the party would be like without Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as president, their resolve to give Pas a run for its money in the next election is not lost.

Their show of emotion over the impending departure of the Prime Minister and party president is as clear as their show of contempt for the Opposition's religious propaganda to win votes. The denunciations against Pas was more vociferous and fiery, and more spirited.

Not unlike the "huddle" before the start of a football match or the "hakka" by New Zealand's All Blacks preceding a rugby game, Umno members appear to be psyching themselves up before unleashing their might against their arch-rival.

The two caricatures in Pas official organ, Harakah, was in a sense, a godsend, as it provided members with added ammunition to drive home the point that Pas is not averse to hitting below the belt and stooping to ludicrously low levels, all in the name of furthering their own interests.

Delegates, during debates and outside the hall, capitalised on the issue, besides giving examples as to why Pas should be run down to the ground before it gets a chance to do the same to the country. The damning of Pas came in many forms, in the guise of pantun, eloquent statements, even jokes and witticisms.

One which stood out came from Kuala Terengganu Wanita Umno committee member Rozalina Mokhtar. Her pantun, siakap senohong, gelama ikan duri, mula-mula cakap bohong, lama-lama jadi Haji Hadi, an obvious jibe against Pas acting president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang drew uproarious laughter.

Puteri Umno chief Azalina Othman Said too was all sarcasm. Alluding to the infamous selak kain incident where a Pas member lifted his sarong in front of two Puteri members during the Pendang by-election, Azalina queried: "I wonder why he lifted his sarong in front of Puteri members, and not Umno Youth members ... we (Puteri) wouldn't know what's under the sarong."

She also likened ulama in Pas to terompah kayu or wooden clogs, manipulated by party leaders to serve their interests.

Other delegates were more serious, with their focus centered on the folly of 'hudud ala-Pas', and the Opposition party's stance on Sekolah Agama Rakyat.

Gua Musang Wanita Umno chief Wan Hazani Wan Mohd Nor blamed Pas for hampering the development of women in Kelantan.

"Women in the State are sidelined. As a result, 500,000 people have emigrated to other States in search of a better life."

Umno Kelantan treasurer Dr Awang Adek Hussin wondered how it could possibly be accurate for Pas to say that only those who vote for the party will have a place in heaven.

"Does this mean to say that all the ulama in other countries who inevitably cannot vote for Pas because the party does not exist there are not Islamic? Are ulama in universities in Egypt and the Middle East, who are teachers to Pas leaders, not Islamic because they did not and cannot vote for Pas?"

Cynics claim that this "obsession" and all-out condemnation of the Opposition party proves that Umno is afraid of Pas.

Azalina begs to differ. "Why should we be afraid? The truth is on our

side. We are not afraid of Pas, we are only afraid of Allah."

Umno Youth executive council member Datuk Abdul Rauf Yusof said this current round of Pas-bashing had nothing to do with fear but served more as a rallying cry for members to unite against this common enemy.

Wanita Umno treasurer Datuk Azizah Abdul Samad said it was abject fallacy to say that Umno was afraid of Pas.

"Far from it. The rather fiery condemnation of Pas this time around acts as a reminder of what we ought to be fighting against. Pas is our number one enemy and we should not forget that. We can vanquish them only if we stand as one."

Terengganu Umno liaison committee deputy chief Datuk Idris Jusoh expressed confidence that Umno was capable of crippling Pas.

"If we manage to recapture Terengganu, Pas' fortress will be reduced to smithereens for in the State resides four of the party's strongmen - its acting president, vice-president, and Dewan Ulamak and Dewan Muslimat chiefs."

Today will mark the end of the 54th Umno assembly. There will, without a doubt, be another show of emotion. Amidst this melancholy, however, observers are sure that members will leave the PWTC with a new vigour and will to give Dr Mahathir the "best farewell gift ever" - an overwhelming victory in the next general election.

This spiritedness and determination can only mean one thing - big trouble for Pas.