

Umno veterans aim to shed DAP's 'chauvinist image'

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Kuek Ser Kuang Keng

Former Umno assemblyperson Mohd Ariff Sabri and Umno veteran and blogger Aspan Alias are likely to join DAP, with the purpose of shedding the 'chauvinist image' of the Chinese-dominant party.

NONEAspan (right) told Malaysiakini yesterday that he and Mohd Ariff were in "extensive talks" with the DAP leadership over their entry to the party.

"We have not decided, but are close to joining... it should be soon," said the 59-year-old Umno member.

Asked whether they have already joined the party, Zairil Khir Johari, political secretary to DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, responded: "I leave it to the party leadership to announce this."

Aspan denied that they were delaying because of negotiations over their prospects of contesting in the coming general election.

"I know some said I may contest in the next election on a DAP ticket, but nothing of that sort has been discussed between DAP and me."

Their trust in DAP, he said, was based on the party's competency and integrity in governing, as demonstrated by the Penang state government and its respect for the rule of law.

On their preference for DAP over PKR and PAS, Aspan explained that the former has been demonised by the BN as a Chinese chauvinist party, therefore joining it can help debunk the perception.

"I must help a party that lacks a multi-racial image. In fact, multi-racialism is the basic attribute of DAP. I must help them."

Aspan joined Umno in 1971 at the age of 19 and was active in the Kuala Pilah division from the late 1980s until 2000.

NONEMohd Ariff (left) was Pulau Manis assemblyperson and information chief of Pekan Umno division until 2004, which is also the division of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

After retiring from Umno politics, both of them became active bloggers and often write articles critical of Umno and BN.

Ariff blogs under the pseudonym Sakmongkol AK47 while Aspan blogs at aspanaliasnet.blogspot.com.

Reiterating that Umno is a racist party that rallies Malay support by intimidating other races, Aspan stressed that Umno has bred "uncontrollable corruption that can kill a nation".

"I have got to, together with my friends, to find a formula to eradicate corruption, and the best way is joining the DAP and Pakatan Rakyat."

However, he clarified that joining the opposition did not necessarily mean supporting PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim as the issues concerned were far beyond Anwar.

Being among the pioneer staff members of Permodalan Nasional Bhd, the government's pivotal instrument for implementing the New Economic Policy (NEP), Aspan holds a different view from DAP on the controversial policy.

He explained that preferential economic treatment for the Malays under the NEP was just one of the processes to achieve the ultimate NEP goal of national unity.

"NEP then was supported by all races because BN expanded the economic cake and it was shared by both the bumiputera and non-bumiputera. BN developed a very big middle class," Aspan said, before moving on to attack the current regime for "killing the policy" and replacing with programmes to enrich its cronies.

"The percentage of middle class has been reduced under the current BN rule and my struggle is to maintain the size of the middle class to ensure the nation's stability," Aspan added.

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