

We're Islamist democrats, says PAS leader

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By Hazlan Zakaria

After 64 years in political existence, PAS has "come of age", according to the executive director of the party's research institute, Dzulkefly Ahmad, who is a member of the progressive faction in the Islamic party called the Erdogans.

"(We are) no longer Islamists, but Islamist democrats," Dzulkefly described PAS at a forum in Kuala Lumpur.

This, he explained, was in line with the changing stance of Islamists worldwide, as was observed during the Arab Spring in the Middle East.

Established before Merdeka as the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party or PMIP, it changed its name to Parti Islam Se-Malaysia or PAS in the 1970s.

According to the MP for Kuala Selangor, Islamists are globally shifting from their "Islamic state doctrine" and moving to articulate their message in a language more easily understood by the general populace and in a more genial way.

"It is all about how we profess our obedience to God in the most critical of issues, which is governance and government," Dzulkefly told a forum titled 'Beauty and the Beast', organised by think-tank Refsa at Publika Solaris Dutamas yesterday afternoon.

And through governance and government, Dzulkefly said, it became the duty of a Muslim to contribute all efforts to make the world a better place for all.

Such responsibility is part and parcel of the Islamic faith, which facilitates not only human relationship with God, but also the relationship among humans and their joint stewardship of this Earth.

The 'new age' Islamist democrats, Dzulkefly said, only want to play their part in the democratic governance process and do not seek to force their views - be it political or religious - on anybody.

"It is all about good governance," he added.

New face of PAS

DAP's Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong, who also spoke at the forum, chimed in agreement with Dzulkefly on the new stance of PAS.

Liew related that when the new president of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Mohamed Morsi took office, his first major concern was not Islamic laws, but solving Cairo's garbage woes.

Dzulkefly said that this new face of PAS also defined its role in the Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition.

"We want to be a part of the multi-party coalition," the PAS parliamentarian said.

He added that the party has moved on from its Islamic state stance to the new "state of care and opportunity" or the doctrine of 'Negara Berkeadilan', a concept that is also part of the opposition Pakatan's common party platform, the Buku Jingga.

And unlike the BN's claims of the ruling coalition having practised 'Negara Berkeadilan' for more than 50 years by taking care of the welfare of Malaysians, Dzulkefly argued the PAS' state of care and opportunity was different altogether.

This, he added, was because the PAS concept was not only about taking care of the welfare of the people, but also ensuring that no "corruption, leakages and abuses" prevailed in governance - an area that he believes BN has fared badly.

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