

**PAS duo are truly men of honour**  
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COMMENT PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang's scathing remarks on both its party assemblypersons Saari Sungib and Hasnul Baharuddin during the PAS muktamar in Batu Pahat recently has raised a question about the future of these two men.

Both men had joined colleagues from the DAP and PKR to sign statutory declarations (SDs) to form the majority support for PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as the 15th menteri besar of Selangor after the embattled Abdul Khalid Ibrahim.

Their stance was clearly to help Selangor resolve the prolonged impasse, especially when Hadi himself was making it difficult to reach a Pakatan consensus.

Despite numerous discussions at the top level, Khalid was still claiming that he has the majority support, despite being left with four PAS state exco members.

Both DAP and PKR, along with the two PAS assemblypersons, had given Dr Wan Azizah the majority support in the assembly.

Even Azmin Ali, the candidate picked by the palace to replace Khalid, was one of the 30 who signed the SDs in support of Dr Wan Azizah.

Poor reflection

Hadi's slander of the PAS duo, calling them PKR lackeys ("barua"), is, therefore seen as a smack on the face of, not only the two PAS assemblypersons, but also the other two Pakatan component parties.

As the president of the Islamist party, Hadi (left) should realise that words spoken cannot be retrieved, and no amount of damage control by his deputy a day later could save the party's embarrassment over the accusation.

Till today, Hadi has not apologised nor explained what he meant by the words that were used, "easily bought by PKR".

What was worse when Hadi himself personally accused that both Saari (Hulu Kelang) and Hasnul (Morib) were easily bought by PKR, an accusation that did not go well with Saari, who immediately challenged the president to prove that they had a price tag to the SDs they signed.

The accusation was nothing but a reflection of Hadi himself as a leader of the Islamist party. As pointed out by former exco member Elizabeth Wong, it was Hadi who also slandered Dr

Wan Azizah and lied about her not speaking in parliament. "Volumes of the Hansard from of 1999 - 2008 show otherwise," Wong was quoted as saying by an online portal.

Hadi was also a one-term menteri besar of Terengganu in 1999, when PAS was riding on the wave of protest against Anwar Ibrahim's imprisonment. Back then, PAS, DAP, PKR and PRM formed the Barisan Alternatif, and took over Terengganu from Barisan Nasional.

However, when PAS and DAP parted ways, and Barisan Alternatif was dissolved, PAS' strength under Hadi's leadership was greatly reduced. In 2004, PAS merely won seven parliamentary seats, compared to 27 seats it had won in 1999.

Hadi also lost his parliamentary seat. Even in Kelantan, PAS won by a very slim majority of 24 out of 45 seats, which was subsequently reduced by one seat following the Pengkalan Pasir by-election in 2005.

One can only wait and watch if Hadi will continue to lead PAS in the same direction, after he broke ranks with his Pakatan partners, a relationship that is built on trust.

Men of honour

There are questions over the survival of the Erdogan faction within PAS, given that the ulama faction is powerful. There will be more testing times ahead. The party's ongoing relationship with the other Pakatan component parties will only depend on whether both factions close ranks.

Meanwhile, two PAS assemblypersons deserve the applause, given that they were prepared to make a stand based on conscience.

Both Saari and Hasnul's stance was clearly out of line with PAS, but that is because there was no clear solution. Even decisions made by the party's central committee was hardly adhered to, when Hadi unilaterally submitted his own list of names to the palace.

All odds against them, both Saari and Hasnul exemplify men with integrity who would be prepared to stick their necks out for the sake of the Pakatan coalition. They know well the politicking that was happening between former menteri besar Khalid and his party.

At that juncture, it was a question of who had the majority support. In order to resolve the dispute, amidst the support that Hadi was giving towards Khalid, Saari and Hasnul would have decided that their decision would make a difference, since Khalid, with the support of Umno and PAS assemblypersons, were tied with Wan Azizah, who was supported by PKR and DAP.

The statutory declarations signed by 30 members of the assembly clearly showed that Dr Wan Azizah has the majority support. No one had expected Hadi to throw wild accusations against his own party members during the course of his speech, especially since his earlier speech sounded more conciliatory.

PKR does not have deep pockets to buy both Hasnul and Saari. Even if there were any offers for state exco positions in return for the support, both Hasnul and Saari knew well that within the Pakatan framework, the new menteri besar would have to ruffle some feathers by offering the positions to the duo, if they do not have the blessings from PAS.

Both assemblypersons also know that they would no longer be picked to contest on the PAS banner in the coming general election. Either way, they were prepared to face the consequences in order to find a quick solution to the Khalid Ibrahim saga.

However, with the current state that Pakatan is in now, it is likely that both DAP and PKR may move on to forge alliances with other opposition parties in Sabah and Sarawak, instead of courting PAS, with Hadi still helming it.

Even with PasMa as the bridge with the Pakatan component parties, it is unlikely that PAS will be able to regain the confidence of Pakatan voters.

The question is now asked whether the duo will resign from PAS and move on to join another Pakatan component party. While they may be mulling over it, these men have indeed demonstrated that they are truly men of honour, especially when they were willing to take the stick for the sake of saving Selangor from further collapse during the Khalid crisis.