

## **PAS No 1 will decide Pakatan's future**

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**By Stephen Ng**

COMMENT Now that Husam Musa is out of the PAS presidential race, the platform is now set for incumbent Abdul Hadi Awang and challenger Ahmad Awang to battle it out for the Number One post during the June PAS muktamar.

Who wins the presidential post will determine PAS' future, and whether the other two component parties in Pakatan Rakyat will see a good platform to work with PAS or drop it totally before the coming general election.

At the moment, the jailing of Anwar Ibrahim and the anti-Goods and Services Tax (GST) mood are two major factors which rally the three parties together, with one common objective - to oust Umno and the Barisan Nasional government from Putrajaya.

### **Number One calls the shots**

In PAS, it is the president who calls the shots.

Although there are no written rules in PAS for the president to veto the central working committee's (CWC) decision, as what had happened in the Selangor menteri besar episode last year, the president still holds the loyalty of grassroots PAS members.

There is no doubt about it that in PAS, the Number One post has always gone to the ulama group, leaving only the Number Two position to the Erdogans in the likes of Mohamad Sabu, who is better known as Mat Sabu.

With Hadi helming PAS, the Islamic party will continue to be a thorn in the working relationship between the three component parties in peninsular Malaysia.

Sources close to PAS said that Hadi has personal obligations to Umno, and unlike the late Tok Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, would not have the political will to fight Umno.

Like the late Azizan Abdul Razak (photo) who was menteri besar of Kedah, Hadi was a one-term menteri besar of Terengganu.

Due to lack of leadership and political will to capture Putrajaya, both ulama had failed to harness the political momentum built by the former Barisan Alternatif and now Pakatan Rakyat in order to stay in power.

The muktamar decision this time around will be crucial to PAS' own political survival, whether it can continue to operate as a party that is still relevant to the Muslims (both rural and urban), or it will lose its grassroots support to Umno.

Perhaps, a new president, Ahmad, known for his no-nonsense approach to issues, may set a new direction for PAS and the Pakatan coalition, should the three parties choose to stay together.

Grassroots sources say that Ahmad, despite being an ulama leader, is more pro-Pakatan compared to Hadi and he has the stature of the late Tok Guru Nik Aziz.

Husam's decision to withdraw will give Ahmad a better chance to win the Number One post, given that Ahmad would be able to win over both the ulama and pro-Pakatan factions of the party compared to Hadi.

### **Was Hadi being played out?**

When the amendments to the Syariah Criminal Code II 1993 were tabled in the Kelantan state assembly, which suddenly swung open the door towards the implementation of hudud laws in Kelantan, surprisingly, the state opposition gave it their fullest support.

Even Kelantan Umno state assembly person Md Alwi Che Ahmad (right in photo) in an emotional speech threw his support behind the hudud laws, but there was no guarantee that Umno or BN would support the passing of Hadi's private member's bill in Parliament.

Najib would have to prioritise the other non-Muslim component parties over and above its political enemy PAS, but through the grapevine, it is learnt that Najib will allow PAS to battle it out in Parliament by first raising its hopes, only to be dashed against the rock when Pakatan ceases to be a coalition.

The bill, which will be tabled in this parliamentary session, will have to be passed by the Parliament before the hudud laws can be implemented in Kelantan.

PAS will need the support from Umno lawmakers to see through the implementation of the hudud laws, but as Johor Baru MP Shahrir Samad (photo) had indicated, there was no directive from Umno to back the Islamic penal code.

Sources close to PAS have also expressed dissatisfaction with Hadi's private member's bill, which they say is based on a certain section of the syariah laws that is non-existent. For this reason, they say that even Hadi is aware that the Parliament will not be able to pass the bill.

Immediately after the Kelantan state assembly passed the laws, Hadi had tried to jump the queue to push through the hudud agenda in the last parliamentary sitting. He should have realised that neither Umno nor the prime minister was giving the private member's bill the 'urgency' expected by PAS.

In fact, Najib has recently come out with a statement carried only in local Chinese dailies that he is not in favour of the hudud laws.

It happened at a time when Hadi was, in fact, giving his full support to Najib as the prime

minister, something which the late Tok Guru would never have approved or done, while he was president of PAS.

Hadi's statement in fact went contrary to PAS' own directive which was issued during the Permatang Pauh by-election not to support those who do not support the hudud laws.

It appears from the latest developments that Hadi and PAS continue to be played out by Umno through a series of well-coordinated campaigns to break up PAS as well as Pakatan.

Whether PAS will get its act together again will depend on its Number One, which the muktamar will decide.

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