

What will PAS be without Pakatan?

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By Stephen Ng

COMMENT PAS has more to lose than gain, after it is dropped by Pakatan Rakyat and left out to dry.

Its embattled president Abdul Hadi Awang was able to garner the support of the young turks in his party to oust the progressives, despite the number of years of contributions and sacrifices towards the party.

As this juncture, the Islamic party has over a thousand government appointees in Penang alone despite the state government being under a DAP chief minister, proving that Umno's frequent stoking of racial sentiments against the DAP holds no water.

Only a few 'principled' PAS leaders have resigned from their official government posts, but the other PAS leaders who were appointed to special positions are still clinging on to their positions in both Penang and Selangor.

In the eyes of most Pakatan supporters, under the current leadership of Hadi, PAS can no longer enjoy the same level of trust, which was hard-earned by leaders in the likes of the late Tok Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, and other progressives such as Mohamad Sabu, Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa and Khalid Samad.

Mohamad (photo), who is better known as Mat Sabu, has charged that there appears to be invisible hands behind the recent muktamar which has caused the split in PAS.

The former deputy president, however, has accepted defeat and decided to move on, but whether he will be joining PasMa, an NGO which may leave PAS to form a political party, is yet to be seen after the meeting this weekend.

PasMa is said to be a better alternative to the present leadership of PAS under Hadi to form alliance with Pakatan, but the question remains whether PasMa would be able to register itself as a political party in time for the next general election, or it would have to use the banner of other Pakatan component parties.

Two weeks before the muktamar, DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang had predicted that Hadi would be returned as party president. According to analysts, Hadi may have won his personal battle of survival within PAS, and managed to even purge the Erdogans within his party, but he has lost the bigger war.

PAS would remain the fort of the ulama faction. Some analysts have even predicted that PAS may lose its grip on Kelantan because of Hadi's style of politics.

The former menteri besar Nik Aziz was able to hold the fort because of his good relations

with the grassroots. However, the Nik Aziz factor is no longer there, making Kelantan more vulnerable to internal politicking to even replace the present Menteri Besar, Ahmad Yaakob.

Since cutting ties with the DAP during the muktamar, DAP, too, has expressed its disinterest in working with PAS in the coming general election, which means that PAS may have to either go it alone or join forces with Umno and BN in the coming general election.

It is not for PAS to decide whether it can continue to be part of Pakatan, but the final decision has to come from the other component parties within Pakatan on whether they want PAS dropped.

Due to the strong sentiments on the ground, my guess is that, rather than dying a natural death, Pakatan has no choice but to continue on with its struggle, albeit without PAS, as in the case of Barisan Nasional, where the entire coalition's existence does not depend on any one political party.

Pakatan will carry on with the people's mandate to push for a change of the federal government, leaving behind Hadi and his young turks to hang out to dry. Hadi has himself to blame for having drawn a wedge to split the Islamic party into the winning ulama against the losing Erdogans.

A big contrast

Compared to the line-up of more savvy leaders in the past, the current line-up of new faces in pro-ulama PAS will soon be put to the test.

Will they be more outspoken compared to the Erdogans, or will they merely act as the rubber stamp for their president? Only time will tell.

The new blood may have the passion, but what they appear to lack is the wisdom of the late 'Tok Guru' Nik Aziz who was both politically savvy and established in his religious understanding of Islam. It was Nik Aziz who was able to hold both factions of PAS together.

In the past, under Nik Aziz, both the Erdogans and the ulama were able to hold the fort together against their arch-rival Umno, but now the ulama easily gave their endorsement to Hadi to form a unity government with Umno.

Nik Aziz would not have approved any form of unity government with Umno, having himself experienced the bitterness when PAS joined Barisan Nasional and subsequently left the coalition in 1977. But the young turks hardly understand the nature of Umno politics.

The younger generation may have not even have remembered the bloody 1985 Memali tragedy, which adversely affected PAS' image as a political party. The older PAS members remember this clearly. Therefore, any discussion to join forces with Umno will further lead to another split in PAS between the younger generation of ulama and PAS supporters who

are still loyal to Nik Aziz.

As it is, its Youth chief Nik Abduh, who is one of the sons of Nik Aziz, lacks grassroots support compared to the wing's former leader Suhaizan Kaiat.

Nik Abduh rose in rank not because of his own capabilities, but because of the sudden surge of ulama delegates present in the recent muktamar. Between the incumbent and Nik Abduh, most people would have predicted that Suhaizan was a better candidate to keep his seat.

Country's administration

Administration of the country or even the state requires a lot of good leadership, as well as strong administrative and managerial skills. Soon, the young ulama in PAS will learn that, in order to remain a state government in Kelantan, it is more than being just good religious teachers.

As the singer Johnny Cash would put it, "But you're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good."

For this reason, both Hadi and Azizan Abdul Razak were only chief ministers for one term in both Terengganu and Kedah, respectively. Terengganu was captured again by Umno in 2004 after Hadi was its chief minister for one term, while Kedah similarly fell into the hands of Umno in the last general election after just one term.

Both leaders were known to be autocratic in their style of administration, making it difficult for them to get the full cooperation and the respect from both their partners and their own PAS members.

As the MP of Marang since 2008, Hadi has not made as much impact in the political arena to earn the respect of fellow Malaysians as others who joined the fray around the same time such as PKR's Rafizi Ramli and DAP's Dr Ong Kian Ming.

Hadi has not touched on key issues such as corruption, rising cost of living, cronyism and nepotism. His only recent debut was when he was trying to push his Private Member's Bill, which even fellow PAS leaders have advised him that it is based on a section of the Syariah law that does not exist at all. This means that Hadi is aware that the bill would be rejected by Parliament.

Hadi's inability to push through the Private Member's Bill will mean that he, too, will lose the support of the PAS grassroots, at a time when even the Kelantan state Umno had expressed its support, with Kok Lanas state assemblyperson Md Alwi Che Ahmad who had expressed unequivocal support of the bill.

More insights into the 'post-muktamar PAS' will be shared during a bah kut teh chat with former president of PAS' Non-Muslim Supporters Wing Hu Pang Chaw (photo) today June

13 (11am) at GoodHome Restaurant at No 4 Jalan SS23/11, Taman SEA, Petaling Jaya.

Seats are limited to only the first 40 pax at RM15 per pax paid. Registration is on first-come first-served basis (tel 03-74975201).

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