

Mahfuz tells PAS, accept times have changed

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By Alyaa Azhar

PAS veteran Mahfuz Omar said his party has painted itself into the corner and there would be serious repercussions should it now make a U-turn on its decision to sever ties with DAP.

The PAS parliamentarian is of the opinion that if PAS decides to recant the decision taken at the recent party muktamar, it would lose the trust of its hardcore voters.

"It's the same with the DAP. If they make a U-turn, they will lose the trust of their hardcore voters.

"Both parties (DAP and PAS) must take into account the opinions of their hardcore voters over that of their ordinary voters.

"If they make a U-turn, they will be seen as hypocrites," Mahfuz told Malaysiakini in an interview on Tuesday.

Asked whether he believes Pakatan Rakyat has died, Mahfuz said he believes this is so after the muktamar passed the motion to sever ties with the DAP, and after which DAP declared that Pakatan no longer existed.

"Even though there is the argument that although one party is no longer there, the two other component parties can make up Pakatan, (but) how can you sit together in government?" he queried.

Mahfuz's response is in direct contrast to the stand adopted by his party president Abdul Hadi Awang who has repeatedly said that Pakatan still exists with PAS and PKR.

Mahfuz was also asked why PAS seemed rather reluctant to finalise its move to cut off ties with the DAP.

"The party may be ready to do so (sever ties) with the DAP, but it is not ready to do so with PKR.

"This is based on PAS' position in the Selangor government. If the syura council declares that the party will sever ties with the DAP and not PKR, this would be harder for Selangor Menteri Besar Azmin Ali as he has to make a choice.

"He will have to choose and one of the parties, either DAP or PAS, will have to back off," he said.

If debated, motion would be rejected

Mahfuz also related the story of how the controversial motion to sever ties with the DAP was passed without debate at the June muktamar.

The Pokok Sena MP said the matter was decided during the central leadership meeting chaired by Hadi the night before the full muktamar commenced.

A motion by the Tumpat PAS division on strengthening the Pakatan coalition was combined with the ulama wing's motion to sever ties with DAP.

However, the central leadership then wanted to 'shorten' the long motion which spelled out nine reasons for the party to sever its ties with DAP.

Mahfuz said he then explained in detail to those present the pros and cons if the motion were to be passed without debate. It was resolved that the motion would put to the floor without debate by party delegates.

On the second day of the muktamar, he was informed by then PAS vice-president Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man that Hadi wanted to revisit the matter which puzzled Mahfuz since it had been decided upon already.

"But he said there were some other things that needed to be discussed. So I met him, together with former PAS secretary-general Mustafa Ali and former deputy president Mohamad Sabu and former vice-president Salahuddin Ayub.

"I asked why we did not discuss the matter properly with the other central working committee members earlier. He said there was no time.

"So in the end, the president asked - and it was agreed upon by the spiritual leader (Haron Din) - that the motion was to be passed without debate," he said.

Mahfuz said the muktamar should have been indignant that the motion was not to be debated.

"Everyone should have agreed for it to be debated and if it was debated, the motion could have been rejected. But it didn't happen that way," he said.

'Look at things comprehensively'

The motion in question has resulted in PAS and DAP continuing to be at loggerheads with the former maintaining that Pakatan is still in existence.

DAP, on the other hand, has since declared that Pakatan is dead. Azmin, as Selangor menteri besar, has been urged to choose either between DAP or PAS to continue administering the state.

Asked on the perception PAS is now controlled by conservative elements, Mahfuz said the leadership should ensure they do not get influenced by the various groups surrounding them.

Citing former PAS president Fadzil Noor who once stood on the same debating platform as former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad and who had also visited Anwar Ibrahim after he was sacked as deputy prime minister, Mahfuz said the late PAS president did not let outside influences shape his decisions.

"PAS leaders who carry the party's future must look at things more comprehensively.

"Maybe my view is wrong but I may be looking at things from a different angle," he said.

PAS, if it wants to continue staying relevant in the country's political scenario, must accept that times have changed, he added.

"People think differently today. People join PAS today not because it is the opposition.

"People today make decisions with wisdom and they are very critical," he observed.

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