

Door for PAS still open, says Kit Siang

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INTERVIEW While DAP may have repeatedly proclaimed that Pakatan Rakyat is "dead", the party does not rule out the possibility of teaming up with PAS in the future.

Asked whether DAP and PAS would form an alliance, for their fourth time, in the next general election, veteran DAP leader Lim Kit Siang said it was a possibility.

However, PAS would first have to show commitment towards Pakatan's common policy framework.

"It is not for me to rule out anybody. The basic principle is that PAS has to be committed to the common policy framework of Pakatan.

"If PAS is not prepared for this, I don't think it will be in the picture," Lim said in an interview with Malaysiakini last Thursday.

In the 1980s, DAP teamed up with PAS as Gagasan Rakyat, and then again as Barisan Alternatif in the late 1990s. In 2008, the two parties, along with PKR, formed Pakatan Rakyat.

Unlike the loose coalitions in the past, Pakatan in December 2009 designed its common policy framework that was signed by Lim, PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim and PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang.

Over the past year, DAP has been arguing that PAS' renewed pursuit of implementing hudud, the Islamic penal system, which would alter the core of Malaysia's criminal justice system, was a betrayal of the common policy document.

In reaction to DAP's constant criticism, PAS resolved at its recent annual delegates meeting, the 61st party muktamar, that its leaders cut ties with DAP.

With that, DAP concluded that PAS had effectively announced the "death" of Pakatan.

Lim said that as a coalition, Pakatan had ceased to function effectively a year ago, after the coalition's top leaders were unable sit together for meetings.

'Think of the unthinkable'

DAP has for long been complaining about Abdul Hadi's non-attendance at the Pakatan leadership council meetings, since his representatives are not authorised to decide on Pakatan's collective decisions.

In declaring that Pakatan was dead, Lim, who has 50 years of politics under his belt, went on to moot the formation of a new "post-BN, post-Pakatan" coalition to "Save Malaysia".

This suggestion came five days after Hadi (photo) tabled a Private Member's Bill in the Dewan Rakyat, seeking the amendment of laws preventing Kelantan from implementing hudud.

Elaborating on the idea, Lim said Malaysians must envision a new political scenario, citing the example of how some countries can, after an election, have different coalitions at the federal and state levels.

"We had in Europe different situations at the national and state levels, coalitions with contracts for a period.... so, we will see how things can work out here in Malaysia," he said.

Asked about the recent meeting among PKR, DAP and former PAS office bearers - the group that has been described as "progressives", the G18 or Harapan Baru - at which the possibility of a "Pakatan 2.0" was raised, Lim said he was not privy to the discussions.

He said at this stage, he wasn't sure what a new coalition, which DAP would be part of, would look like.

"This is not something everyone can plan or try to bring about. This is something we have to wait, for further developments.

"Pakatan was people-driven. Similarly, if there is a new alignment of political forces, it must be people-driven as well, rather than leader- or party-driven," he noted.

No more 'master race'

In April 2008, in the 12th general election, Pakatan was formed weeks after DAP, PKR and PAS caused BN the loss of its traditional two-thirds majority in Parliament, for the first time since 1969.

Lim said that although Pakatan was no more, the hopes and aspirations signalled by the voters, back in 2008, was still very relevant and achievable.

"It is not a complete loss cause," he said.

"A very easy platform is to go back to Pakatan's common policy framework as a basis to defending the Federal Constitution, featuring fundamental principles, ensuring justice, freedom, democracy and good governance as a starting point.

"(For the new coalition) there is no Ketuanan Melayu. There is no master race or master religion."

The new political entity should open to all like-minded parties and individuals, even the

progressives in Umno, Lim added.

However, Lim declined to comment if G18 or Harapan Baru should state their stand on hudud before deciding to be part of the new coalition.

"I don't think it is anybody's business in order to say what the party should or should not do. We will come to an issue when it arises," he said.

'At least we were honest'

On whether Pakatan had wasted a good opportunity of taking Putrajaya by dissolving the coalition, Lim disagreed.

He pointed out that both Pakatan and BN were in a disarray. Thus Putrajaya was still ripe for the picking.

"I don't agree on that theory at all. Although I believe there will be setbacks, but there is no such thing as the opposition spoiling its own chances.

"Looking back, this may be the best for the country. At least the issues have been clarified, and there is a greater sense of candour and honesty about it."

Asked if PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim was still DAP's choice for the post of prime minister, should an opposition coalition win the elections, Lim replied in the positive.

However, he did not want to be drawn into discussions on whether Anwar's wife Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail could serve as a replacement.

"Well, he is still in the picture, he is still very much in the picture, although he is in the Sungai Buloh Prison," Lim said.