

Having PAS in Pakatan 2.0 is unrealistic

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COMMENT Reservations over the advisability of having PAS in a fledgling Pakatan Rakyat 2.0 are well founded.

Voiced by a moving force behind Gerakan Harapan Baru, the NGO that's likely to mutate into a PAS splinter party whose provisional name is Parti Amanah Negara, qualms over the Islamic party's presence in a new opposition coalition cannot be easily dismissed.

Hanipa Maidin, who bore with some fortitude the rough treatment he received from his antagonists in PAS, said that discordant policy stances, disregard of the need for esprit de corps among coalition leaders, a penchant for making public pronouncements without regard for their impact on electoral politics, and recurrent animosity towards the DAP, have all rendered the presence of PAS wholly untenable within the ranks of the opposition.

Hanipa (photo), stoic target of a thump on his back by a lackey of party president Abdul Hadi Awang during an acrimonious PAS central committee meeting earlier this year, has earned the spurs that entitles him to criticise his former party.

The 'former' here should be in inverted commas because PAS secretary-general Takiyuddin Hassan is at pains to say that only when PAS members actually join another political party would their membership be automatically terminated.

Until then, they still are PAS members, Takiyuddin maintains, even if in bad faith.

None of the score or more PAS state and federal legislators who have figured prominently in the effort to get a new Islamic party going has had his or her membership in PAS terminated.

Some have announced their resignation from their positions in party divisional committees but not from membership of the party itself.

They are not in any hurry to sever ties to PAS despite their very public manoeuvrings in favour of a rival political party and PAS, likewise, is not keen to boot them out in spite of imminent insurgency threatening their ranks.

The dissidents want to show they are not disloyal to the cause of Islamist politics despite their wanting to form a splinter party and PAS, self-proclaimed guardians of political Islam in Malaysia, desire to show as much forbearance as possible to those they view as erring.

Needless to say, a considerable amount of dissembling colours the attitude of both sides.

But the legalism of Takiyuddin's (photo) interpretation of party rules provides an ironic

counterpoint to his insistence that PAS did not automatically cease to be a member of Pakatan Rakyat when the party opted for hudud in Kelantan, a stance that was never in the Common Policy Framework that PKR, DAP and PAS signed on to before Election 2013.

This is what makes PAS so awkward a proposition as a partner in the opposition ranks: they can be scrupulous in their adherence to one set of rules and cavalier in their interpretation of another.

This is now unacceptable to a broad range of the electorate that gave the opposition a plurality over Umno-BN in the popular vote in Election 2013.

Gift on a silver platter

These voters are apt to see the current turmoil in Umno-BN over the 1Malaysia Development Berhad issue, which has metastasised from a national concern into an international cause celebre, as a gift on a silver platter to the opposition to project their case as substitute governors.

That would be difficult to do if there is a party within their ranks like PAS whose president Hadi and spiritual leader, Haron Din, are on public record as having expressed support for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's continued stay as national CEO.

The pair assumed that stance even as revelations from the 1MDB affair began to engross and stun the nation from the middle of this year.

In the teeth of these disclosures, the PM is seen to be clinging on to office amid a mounting chorus of urgings for him to quit, excepting of course his hirelings and people like Hadi and Haron who back him to stay.

This is a stance Hadi and Haron have not renounced though in the party's deputy presidency, PAS has an occupant, Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man, who is instinctively pro-opposition even as Hadi and Haron appear to be unabashedly pro-Umno.

Such a party is best left to its own devices to sort out this apparent contradiction without the help or promptings of the rest of the opposition.

Hanipa is right in counseling a fledgling Pakatan 2.0 to leave PAS out because it will save the opposition the burden of much explanation that, even if attempted, would in the end be unsustainable.

An evolving Pakatan 2.0 must be crystal clear about his goals and practices especially now when Umno-BN does not know fair from foul.