

PAS-Umno talks - cause for concern?
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Recently there's been some speculation that if there's any party that might leave Pakatan Rakyat at the eleventh hour, it would be PAS.
MCPX

Why?

To cooperate with Umno, no less, for the sake of 'Malay unity'.

This is not PAS-phobia or PAS-paranoia on our part. In fact, we find such a proposition hard to believe but in recent weeks, we have privately heard smatterings of concern about PAS-Umno cooperation emanating from both DAP and PKR folks.

If PAS were to leave Pakatan, it would definitely throw a spanner into the works and foil Anwar Ibrahim's plan of taking control of the parliament (and thus, the federal government).

These rumours didn't appear out of nowhere. It's due to the fact that since the March 8 elections, Umno has been reaching out to PAS, ostensibly to discuss issues concerning 'Malay unity'.

kuala berang by-election 290804 pas and umnomembersThat Umno sees absolutely nothing wrong with talking to PAS about Malay unity but would be completely outraged if MCA or Gerakan were to talk to DAP about Chinese unity, is not surprising at all. It's yet another manifestation of Umno's double standards.

That it would reach out to PAS, its most direct rival, so soon after the election is also not surprising. It's a common trick Umno plays every time it's weak. The surprising thing is that PAS has actually been receptive to such overtures!

Surely PAS leaders know Umno better than that. Perhaps it's PAS' way of reminding its Pakatan partners to not ever take the Islamic party for granted.

Our sources tell us that PAS figures who have been talking to Umno are doing so with the blessing of the party's senior leaders, with the understanding that any PAS-Umno cooperation must be on PAS' terms, not Umno's.

pas pkr dap pc barisan rakyat coalition 010408 02We are inclined to believe that to be the case as PAS leaders are not stupid. Neither would they forget the bitter experience of joining Barisan Nasional in 1973, experiencing a full-blown leadership tussle in the process and culminating in the loss of the Kelantan state government in 1978. It would only regain control of that state in 1990.

We also understand that PAS leaders such as Abdul Hadi Awang and Husam Musa, in particular, are very wary of Umno, knowing full well Umno's ulterior motives whenever it initiates 'Malay unity' talks, or as the Malays put it, "ada undang di sebalik batu".

While we believe the notion of PAS crossing over to BN is about as likely as Khairy

Jamaluddin joining PKR, we also note that PAS has not gone out of its way to assure opposition supporters or its Pakatan partners that joining forces with Umno is something that's out of the question.

The reason for this could simply be that since PAS-Umno talks have not been widely reported, PAS leaders might feel there is no need to justify, explain or defend itself for hobnobbing with the 'enemy'. Why give these talks more publicity than they deserve especially if there's no intention of switching sides?

PAS, state your stand

Still, we feel there is good reason for PAS to state, in unequivocal terms, that it would never join Barisan Nasional – if not publicly, at the very least it should say so to its coalition partners. To our knowledge, it has yet to do that. Thus, the rumblings of concern that we've been hearing from the DAP and PKR side.

anwar open house 301006 anwar cucuk kit siang Making clear your official stance is a smart and practical political move. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah has done just that, warning publicly that if PAS were to ever come to power, it would try to form an Islamic state. Never mind that he is actually on friendly terms with certain people in PAS. The point that Razaleigh is making is that he's committed to Umno and has no plans to leave it. He's reassuring his base.

Again, we'd like to reiterate that we don't believe for a second that PAS is about to leave Pakatan for BN. However, a public show of allegiance would go far to reassure the other Pakatan leaders where PAS' loyalty lays.

We think it would help matters also if DAP does not push 'hot button' issues, especially those concerning Islam. Since PAS is not raising the issue of an Islamic state, there's no reason for DAP to bring it up either.

anwar and hadi awang 081104 Indeed, DAP's senior leaders such as Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng have been careful not to put PAS on a spot. DAP leaders were remarkably restrained about the recent Syariah Court decision to allow a Chinese Islamic convert to return to practicing Buddhism.

Restraint is something that's alien to Karpal Singh, though. Through his various public statements and unnecessary spats with the likes of Nik Aziz Nik Mat (something of a loose cannon himself), Karpal has inadvertently united disparate Malay activist groups including those on the very fringes of the political spectrum.

No doubt, DAP and PAS are traditionally wary of each other. But other than the Karpal outbursts, there have been surprisingly few public disagreements between these two parties since the election. This bodes well for the future of Pakatan.