

# DAP-PAS cooperation not pragmatic: Centre

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**PETALING JAYA:** Despite the courtship rituals, open cooperation between DAP and PAS in the next general election is impossible due to their political differences, said a political analyst.

Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research director Ibrahim Suffian said it is "not pragmatic" for the two parties to be seen as working closely with each other as DAP had learnt a bitter lesson from the 1999 polls.

"The Chinese voters would not support PAS's policies, especially on the Islamic state policy. By associating with PAS, DAP would have to pay the price," he said when contacted by *theSun*.

PAS, DAP and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (Keadilan) formed their high-profile Barisan Alternatif (BA) before the 1999 polls to challenge Barisan Nasional.

It was a big mistake for the DAP, which suffered a major setback as it only secured 10 seats. Heavyweight leaders Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh lost their bids.

DAP later blamed PAS's agenda on the Islamic state for having deterred Chinese voters from voting for the party which traditionally has strongholds in Chinese-majority constituencies.

In 2001, citing fundamental differences, DAP pulled out from the opposition front and has since been consistently speaking out against any attempts to make or label Malaysia an Islamic state.

DAP's association with PAS had the approval of the electorates who gave the party 12 seats in the 2004 general election. Kit Siang came back as Parliamentary Opposition leader.

When former deputy premier Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was released from jail, he was

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seen as a bridge to patch the differences between DAP and PAS, especially with increasing speculation that the next general election will be called at the end of this year or early next year.

Last Wednesday, Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said PAS was open to DAP and other political parties working together to face the Barisan Nasional.

The PAS spiritual leader's suggestion was not received well by DAP whose secretary-general Lim Guan Eng has confirmed Ibrahim's prediction that it is hard for the two parties to stand together.

"The concern of non-Muslims towards PAS is its Islamic agenda. That cannot be dismissed. We will work with Keadilan but not PAS unless it drops its Islamic agenda. Keadilan does not support the Islamic state. They support the Federal Constitution as we do," Guan Eng told *theSun*.

"The decision not to work with PAS did not come from me. It's the party's decision in the congress."

The next DAP congress will be held in September. But Guan Eng said he did not foresee anybody putting this up as an agenda for discussion.

Asked how the party would convince voters that it has no links with PAS since DAP is working with Keadilan, a PAS ally, he said: "Our stand and approach has been very consistent. We stick to our position that we are objecting to PAS's Islamic agenda."

On another matter, Ibrahim noted that the biggest problem faced by the opposition parties is that people are not convinced they are credible enough to run a government.

PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said yesterday the party has no connection with the DAP when it comes to elections.

He was speaking to reporters after chairing PAS Central Committee monthly meeting at the party headquarters in Jalan Raja Laut.