

**With Selangor award, Utusan paints Hasan as PAS-Umno matchmaker**  
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**By Melissa Chi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 7 — Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia said today that former PAS state commissioner Datuk Dr Hasan Ali's "Datuk Paduka" title award in conjunction with the Sultan Selangor's birthday this weekend will play a role in "marrying" Umno and PAS.

Assistant Chief Editor Datuk Zaini Hassan, writing in his weekly column, said he was informed the Sultan recognises Hasan's role and saw him as a unifying factor for the Malays in Selangor.

"In Selangor, the Dr Hasan factor is very important. His followers in PAS (who share the same views) are large in numbers. His influence among Malay civil servants in Selangor is also significant.

"Both factors had given Dr Hasan advantages to bring about changes. Dr Hasan is able to make that marriage happen in order to uphold the sanctity of Islam and the wholeness of the Malays in Selangor. Selangor needs to be saved," Zaini said.

He also pointed out that Hasan is the only Selangor executive councillor to receive the state medal from the Sultan, claiming he will be given the "Datuk Paduka Mahkota Selangor" title.

This comes on the heels of the Umno general assembly last week pronouncing that PAS cannot supplant Umno as the political guardians of the Malay community.

Then, Umno also took to accusing DAP leaders of marginalising Malays in Pakatan Rakyat states and challenging the sanctity of Islam as the country's "official religion".

Hasan, who is in charge of the state's Islamic affairs portfolio, previously defended a raid by the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (Jais) on the Damansara Utama Methodist Church in August, claiming there was proselytisation of Muslims on the premises.

Widely seen as a religious conservative, Hasan has been at odds with the ruling PR state government's seemingly liberal policies on several occasions, most notably his push for a beer sale ban in the country's most developed state earlier this year.

Hasan had lost badly in the recent PAS election as the Islamist party moved to embrace leaders like Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad, who is seen to represent a more progressive and inclusive brand of Islam.

"The Dr Hasan factor is very important. He is the hope for change. There are too many secrets with the DAP-led Selangor government which does not sit easy with the Malays' position and the sanctity of Islam.

"DAP is actually afraid of Dr Hasan. Even PKR has a headache with him," Zaini continued.

Zaini pointed out that the Sultan said he did not want to see Malays and Muslims in this country be divided, but conceded the Ruler did not mean that Umno and PAS has to "marry" because it was not his right to interfere in politics.

Since Election 2008, Umno has continued to make advances towards the Islamist party on claims that a unification of the two would guarantee the Malay community's hold on political power.

However, PAS has repeatedly snubbed the efforts and expressed its commitment towards PR and their common aim to oust Umno and Barisan Nasional from Putrajaya.

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