

Hasan Ali says will continue to support Himpun
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12 — Datuk Hasan Ali insisted today he will continue to support Himpunan Sejuta Umat (Himpun) despite PAS having said it does not back the so-called gathering of a million Muslims.

The Selangor executive councillor, who spoke at Himpun's first gathering in October, told reporters today he will continue to attend further Himpun events beginning with the gathering in Ipoh this Saturday.

Hasan has been at odds with the Selangor government's seemingly liberal policies. "Yes, I received invitation to attend in Perak and other states and I have accepted in the interest of the faith. I will continue to tell people about the threats to the faith and will inform my party of my involvement.

"Whether or not with the blessing from Selangor PAS, I will go ahead. I joined Himpun based on faith. Even if people say no, don't do it, I will jump over fences to defend Islam," the Gombak Setia assemblyman said.

Some PAS leaders had accused Umno of using Himpun as a platform to revive failed unity talks between both parties, using "unfounded" threats of Christianisation as a basis for inter-party co-operation.

Malay rights group Perkasa also lauded the success of Himpun, saying it unified Muslims even from opposing political factions with the presence of leaders including Hasan, a former Selangor PAS chief.

Islamic NGOs had organised the gathering to protest against Christians "challenging the sovereignty" of Islam on the back of allegations of proselytisation of Muslims.

Hasan also said today he will be "loyal to any organisation and willing to work together on these three messages" when asked about PAS-Umno merger efforts in the name of Islamic and Malay unity.

Widely seen as a religious conservative, Hasan has been at odds with the ruling Pakatan Rakyat (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.

Utusan Malaysia last week sought to paint Hasan as the maker of an elusive match between Umno and PAS, claiming he was seen as a unifying factor for the Malay community in Selangor.

The Umno-owned newspaper said the award of the "Datuk Paduka" title to Hasan over the weekend will play a role in "marrying" Umno and PAS.

Since Election 2008, Umno has made repeated overtures to the Islamist party, claiming that a unification would guarantee the Malay community's hold on political power.

But 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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