

Hasan Ali says willing to discuss PAS-Umno unity with PM
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 — Embattled PAS leader Datuk Hasan Ali has openly announced his willingness to accept any invitation from the prime minister to discuss uniting his party with Umno, claiming he would do so using Islam as his pillar.

In an interview with Utusan Malaysia published today, the Selangor state executive councillor, whose political future in PAS currently hangs in balance, said he would give a “positive answer” to such an invitation.

“I have no problem (with that). If the prime minister says we appoint you to gain input, that in the name of unity I be allowed to use Islam as my pillar, insyaallah I will give a positive answer,” he told the Umno-owned daily.

Hasan (picture) also said he “hopes” to be invited into his party’s top leadership committee to help resolve the matter, adding that if Islam is regarded as the true unifying factor, such talks would be more successful.

Asked, however, if he would leave PAS if the party no longer champions Islam, the Malays and the royal institution, the former Selangor PAS chief offered a non-committal comment.

“It depends, because this question is for what’s to come. Fact is, it is not easy for us to make a decision when it comes to matters like this. To just leave a party is not easy.... it involves careful consideration and on this matter I will first refer to the (party’s) ulama, my political friends and religious adviser,” he said.

Hasan added, however, he was willing to co-operate with any party other than PAS as long as their struggle involves three key elements — Islam, the Malays and the royal institution.

He reiterated his readiness to accept the possibility of being dropped from PAS’s candidates list for the coming polls, but alleged there may be “interference” from among his party’s state leadership.

“I feel there is a little interference at the state level. This interference is perhaps to hamper Dr Hasan’s progress. I do not know for sure but this is my speculation,” he claimed.

PAS had denied on Sunday Utusan Malaysia’s report that Hasan and former deputy president Nasharudin Mat Isa will be dropped as candidates as discussions on candidates have not begun.

The report follows Selangor PAS information chief Shaari Sungib’s remarks, published in several blogs, that Hasan did not garner enough nominations from PAS branches in the state.

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