

Settle Islamic state issue now, says Hasan Ali
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 20 — Controversial PAS member Datuk Hasan Ali wants his party's top leadership to settle the thorny question about establishing Malaysia as an Islamic state with its Pakatan Rakyat (PR) partners now rather than later.

"If now we cannot be definitive on this issue, how about when we go to Putrajaya? There'll be more problems then," the Islamist party's central committee member told reporters today.

Hasan (picture) said the party had deviated from its original fight, pointing to the shift to push the concept of a "Negara Berkebajikan" at the party's annual general meeting earlier this year.

He said setting up a "Negara Berkebajikan" could be undertaken by any party, and that it was not necessarily on based on Islam or the Quran. He pointed to Sweden and Australia as among several examples to illustrate his point.

The party leadership, however, has said its "Negara Berkebajikan" concept is different from being just a "welfare state" and explained it meant a nation that was caring and mindful of its citizens' wellbeing.

Hasan said issues such as fighting corruption, closing the gap between the rich and the poor and pushing for a minimum wage were secondary to setting up an Islamic state.

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad once declared Malaysia an Islamic nation, but the Federal Constitution states that Islam is the religion of the federation, resulting in various groups questioning the country's status — whether it is secular or religious.

Hasan told reporters the biggest obstacle to PAS achieving this goal was a senior politician from ally DAP who insisted that it would happen "over my dead body".

The PAS man did not disclose the DAP man's name.

He refused to be drawn into stating if he would withdraw from his party or push for PAS to quit the opposition alliance if it could not resolve the issue, saying only "I leave it to the leadership. To me, it's almost non-negotiable. That's the [party's] principle."

Hasan suggested that the PAS leadership, which he noted is now controlled by the "professionals" instead of the "ulamaks", could step in to discuss the matter with the DAP and PKR.

He believes their political allies could come around to PAS's view with more discussion.

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/settle-islamic-state-issue-now-says-hasan-ali/>