

No dole in PAS's 'Negara Berkebakjikan', says Mustafa
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10 — PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali said today that the able-bodied jobless will not be put on the dole but will be cared for in other ways under its "Negara Berkebakjikan" alternative welfare system.

The opposition party's president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang had put forward this concept during its assembly in June and said the "Negara Berkebakjikan" is an integral part of the Islamist party's manifesto for the coming 13th general elections, widely believed to be after October to allow the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government to first present a generous Budget in Parliament.

However, the idea appears to have drawn much flak after being highlighted in the mainstream media, prompting PAS to hold a national briefing today to clarify the concept to its grassroots members.

Mustafa told delegates at a national meeting to shed more light on the concept today that under the Western practice, the component called welfare provided unemployment benefits that were not very helpful to the jobless.

"Orang tak kerja, kerajaan biayai dia hidup ... atas pembiayaan kerajaan. Dalam negara berkebakjikan, bukan macam itu. Rakyat yang berkeupayaan mesti kerja [Those who don't work live on the government dole. In a 'negara berkebakjikan', it's not like that. The people who are able-bodied must work]," Mustafa said.

He added that the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) pact would design a different fiscal policy to make sure such measures take effect, should it come to power.

While the ruling BN has openly said Malaysia is a welfare state, the government does not actually practise a dole system; it pays a limited monthly allowance to households categorised as hardcore poor.

PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu said Malaysia's workforce totalled 10 million people but less than 10 per cent were represented by trade unions, which risked the protection of their interests.

The popular preacher nicknamed Mat Sabu also said that many Malay Muslims were unhappy with the management of the mandatory collection of wang zakat (alms).

"Many are unhappy with the way wang zakat is managed. Nationally, the fund has collected over RM1 billion ... Selangor alone has RM300 million," he said, and suggested that the fund would be better used for the public's welfare under the "Negara Berkebakjikan" concept than at present.

The PAS leadership translated into English today its Islam-based idea of "Negara Berkebakjikan" as "a nation of care and opportunity", to prevent the concept from being

misunderstood further.

PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub told party delegates it was the closest interpretation of the concept, in the English-language, and that it was crucial not to confuse it with the concept of a "welfare state" as practised in the West.

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