

**Former Utusan scribe joins DAP**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 — Hata Wahari, who was sacked last year from Utusan Malaysia for criticising the Umno-owned daily, today announced his entry into the DAP as a party member.

The senior journalist, who was also formerly the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) president, said he had chosen to join the DAP as he felt it was the most criticised party among its partners in Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

“DAP, I feel, is targetted the most. DAP finds it the hardest to explain to the people that all the slander and allegations aired in the mainstream media are untrue.

“I feel DAP needs to be defended,” he told a joint press conference here chaired by secretary-general Lim Guan Eng.

Hata, who quit his NUJ post last May, worked for Utusan Malaysia from 1995 until he was sacked on April 21 for criticising the Malay daily’s editorial direction.

When asked if the DAP would appoint Hata to any post within the party, Lim said the former Utusan Malaysia journalist had not set any pre-conditions before joining the party.

“Like what Hata has said, he joined DAP due to his principles and no other reason. I feel he did this with an open heart so let us celebrate his membership. On other matters, we will announce later,” he said.

Hata told reporters later that he had weighed his options carefully before deciding to join the DAP and stressed that his only wish was to continue his struggle for freedom of information and the media.

“I needed to use DAP as my platform,” he explained, saying that it was harder to push for press freedom through non-governmental organisations.

He said he had not conveyed any wish to hold a post in the DAP or to contest in the coming polls.

But, said Hata, he had informed the party’s leadership that his hope was to help the party woo the Malay community, particularly in the Umno fortress of Johor, which is also his home state.

“I am bringing back membership forms to my family members as well,” he said, adding that at least 15 members of his family have agreed to become DAP members.

The 43-year-old journalist said the DAP was often demonised in the Malay mainstream media, causing a misconception among the community that the party was a Chinese chauvinist party.

"This is not true and I want to inform the community of this," he said.

The Kluang-born Hata currently still holds the post of treasurer in the NUJ. He is a Bachelor of Communications graduate from Institut Teknologi Mara and currently writes for Harian Malaysia, an online Malay-language newspaper.

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