

Pas leaders at odds over talks

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KOTA BARU : PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and party president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang are once again at odds -- this time over the proposed muzakarah with Umno.

Just two days ago Nik Aziz set conditions for the dialogue to proceed, one of which was "Why Umno rejects Islam" and Hadi had clarified that Pas was only keen to have the muzakarah with Muslim non-governmental organisations and not Umno as reported in the media.

Yesterday, Nik Aziz said the muzakarah should proceed to clear the air on issues affecting the nation, but added it should not be misconstrued as Pas intending to join Umno.

"It is my personal view that the muzakarah should be held as it is very important," he said after opening the Kota Jembal market here.

Nik Aziz said the first step was for Umno to accept the invitation. He also said the conditions should not be viewed as stringent as the muzakarah platform was for national interest.

He said leaders in developed countries such the United States had used a similar platform through debates or dialogues for nation-building.

The spiritual adviser was reported to have said there was no way a muzakarah could be held with-out conditions and other events such as a marriage, required conditions before the couple tied the knot. Likewise, the proposed dialogue should follow a similar procedure.

On his conflicting stand with Hadi, the Kelantan menteri besar said it was okay if Hadi did not agree with him.

"I do not interfere with what the president does."

The muzakarah was mooted by Hadi, who on May 13, was re-ported to have said that the party was open to discussions with any Muslim non-governmental organisations, including Umno, to resolve an allegation against Pas that it had deviated from its original struggle.

Subsequently, Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had said Umno was open to the idea, adding this was not new, as the party was always willing to hold talks on Islam with Pas.

Several quarters and individuals have criticised Nik Aziz's set of conditions saying that he was not sincere.

Yesterday, Bernama reported that Muslim NGO the Young Malaysian Muslim Theologies was disappointed with Pas for imposing conditions even before the discussions were held.

The NGO had viewed it as not sincere and only profited the party.

"I am for the idea of a muzakarah as it is encouraged in Islam and will make a positive impact on Muslim unity," working committee secretariat chairman Fathul Bari Mat Jahaya said.

While agreeing that a muzakarah required conditions, Fathul Bahari said they should not be one-sided or for the good of any specific party.

"Please remember a muzakarah is not about winning or finding faults, and one needs to be able to accept reality. Appoint a moderator among academicians so the discussion will result in something beneficial."

Former Perlis mufti Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin said the muzakarah should not be a platform to debate grievances between both parties as this could be done in Parliament.

"It is best for both parties to find a common ground which will benefit the people and country."

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