

No Umno-PAS talks, says Hadi
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 21 — PAS insisted today there will be no talks between PAS and Umno, blaming the media for misreporting a proposal for a “muzakarah” (discussion) between the two Malay Muslim parties.

President Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said the only discussion PAS was having was with non-governmental organisations over accusations that the Islamist party had veered from its religious principles.

“The question of co-operation between PAS and Umno does not arise. It has been wrongly interpreted that PAS wants a muzakarah with Umno,” he told reporters at a press conference here today.

“If we were to ever have talks with Umno, it would be better if such talks were focused on clean elections,” he added.

He said that PAS was only interested in discussions with NGOs regarding the party’s role in developing the Muslim community in the country.

“PAS is ready to have talks with NGOs to give a clear explanation of Islam, but not with Umno.

“This issue always arises every time we are nearing elections,” he said.

The Marang MP added that PAS is now focusing on its preparations for the upcoming general election, and asked that the issue of talks between the party and Umno no longer be raised.

Malay-language dailies reported last week that Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said Umno was ready to hold talks on Islam with PAS as long as they were for the betterment of the Muslims, the society and the country.

The Umno vice president appeared surprised by PAS’s offer as he said previous suggestions by Umno to hold such talks between the two had been rejected by PAS, particularly Kelantan Mentri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

“If we look at past records, Nik Aziz had never agreed (to the talks). At that time, he said Umno cannot be trusted. But if his intentions are sincere and for the betterment of the Muslims, society and the country, then it won’t be a problem for us,” Muhyiddin was quoted as saying.

He was responding to a reported announcement by Nik Aziz that PAS was always open to discussing Islamic issues with all parties, including Umno.

Muhyiddin said Umno was ready to accept the offer as the party had long suggested holding such talks to solve the problem of a Muslim community.

On Saturday, Nik Aziz reportedly suggested the proposed “muzakarah” with Umno be held before the upcoming 13th general election.

However, Nik Aziz stressed that Umno would have to meet several conditions that would be determined by PAS if the two parties wanted to engage in consensus building towards achieving unity.

He said this when asked about PAS's willingness to hold talks with Umno to start the unification process, particularly uniting the Muslims in the country.

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