

Another son-in-law rises, this time in PAS

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Before the 13th general election, Zaharudin Muhammad was not a well-known name, except among those active in PAS.

These days, the son-in-law of PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (pic) is unflatteringly compared with Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin, who was cast as a bad influence to the then prime minister but is now the Youth and Sports Minister.

Zaharudin is also seen as a growing influence in the Islamist party after two years in the PAS's top decision-making body Syura council and as head of the religious department in Selangor state-owned Kumpulan Perangasang Selangor since 2012.

He is now touted to play a leading role in the party elections later this year, where there is a move to put in more clerics or ulama in the top party leadership and get rid of professionals or "Erdogan", named after Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The professionals, led by deputy president Mohamad Sabu, are at a disadvantage as almost all of them lost in the recent May 5 general elections.

Mohamad lost the Pendang contest, party vice-president Salahuddin Ayub lost in both the Pulau parliamentary seat and Nusajaya state seat while vice-president Datuk Husam Musa lost the Putrajaya contest but claimed victory in Kelantan's Salor state seat.

But he was not named in the Kelantan executive council under new Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yakob.

Another "Erdogan", Dr. Dzulkefly Ahmad, lost the Kuala Selangor federal seat. Only Khalid Samad kept the Shah Alam federal seat.

"This creates a big opportunity for Zaharudin and his comrades, who are unhappy with the professionals' control over the party, to win," a member of the party's top leadership told The Malaysian Insider but asked not to be named.

He also pointed out that Zaharudin's allies, namely PAS Youth leader Nasrudin Hasan and his deputy Nik Mohd Abduh Nik Abdul Aziz, both won in their respective parliamentary seats in Temerloh and Pasir Mas.

Nasrudin was said to be grateful to Zaharudin, for his efforts in lobbying Abdul Hadi into making a "sudden" announcement on his Temerloh candidacy, which was supposed to be contested by PKR's Ahmad Nizam Hamid, the party source revealed.

The Kota Damansara issue

Zaharudin, better known as Din Ayam, was also blamed when Kota Damansara - which was won by Dr Nasir Hashim of PSM in the 2008 general election - fell to Barisan Nasional (BN), after PAS put up a candidate alongside Nasir, BN and three other independents.

BN's Halimatun Saadiah polled 16,387 votes for a 1,527 majority, beating the others to clinch the Kota Damansara state seat.

However, if the 14,860 votes obtained by Nasir and PAS' Rizuan Ismail 7,312 votes were added, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) would have easily won with a total 22,172 votes.

A PAS Selangor source told The Malaysian Insider that Zaharudin had used Nasir's socialist background to influence Abdul Hadi to sign Rizuan's approval to contest the seat, although party secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali had already agreed that the PSM president would contest Kota Damansara on a PKR ticket.

"When Nasir won on a PKR ticket in 2008, Zaharudin, who was residing in Section 8, Kota Damansara, was not happy.

"He had said that Nasir was not Islam enough, did not always attend mosque, and idolised Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, who were communist leaders," the source who declined to be named told The Malaysian Insider.

"Mustafa Ali had to come down to Kota Damansara to give political speeches together with Nasir to explain the actual situation to the people, but that programme was boycotted by the local PAS," he added.

During Election 2013, Abdul Hadi attacked the PKR candidate, whom he alleged had socialist tendencies, although he did not name him openly.

"There are candidates using pictures of Lenin, Stalin, how can PAS support this?

"The PAS people are cooperating with Keadilan... with DAP, not with Lenin or Stalin's party," he had said, referring to Russian communist leaders Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Joseph Stalin in a Youtube video clip.

The Abdullah-Khairi comparison

Party insiders also joke about Abdul Hadi and Zaharudin being similar to Abdullah and Khairi during the Umno leader's term as prime minister between 2003 and 2009.

Khairi was blamed by Umno warlords close to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for BN losing its two-thirds supermajority in the 2008 general election, and also losing Selangor, Perak, Penang and Kedah, as well as failing to take over Kelantan.

The PAS insiders point out the similarity, noting the Islamist party fared badly in the May 5 polls, winning only 21 federal seats against the 23 won in 2008. DAP and PKR meanwhile managed to get 38 and 30 seats in Election 2013.

Kedah was controlled by PAS in 2008, but fell in 2013 and Abdul Hadi's refusal to replace Tan Sri Azizan Razak with another candidate as the menteri besar was said to have contributed to the failure to retain the northern state.

Party insiders are now asking if the son-in-law issue will also spell the downfall of the Marang MP?

For now, it does not seem so, given Abdul Hadi's strong position as an influential cleric in the conservative party. - July 27, 2013.

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