

## **WHAT ABOUT PASMA MERGE WITH DAP?**

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A misfortune can be seen in a positive light.

The preliminary signs are reasonably clear now that the progressive/professional faction of PAS is losing ground in winning influential executive positions in the coming PAS muktamar.

One might think that this is going to be bad news for the future of Pakatan if the ulama faction of PAS dominates the executive positions of PAS.

If we are to take serious note on the state of play by Pakatan component parties during the recent by-elections in Rompin and Permatang Pauh, the signs are very clear that Pakatan can't keep on like this for long. In reality, pre- or post-PAS muktamar does not make any difference to the state of Pakatan after the 'death knell' of the PAS move in tabling the Hudud Bill in Parliament.

The Pakatan status quo is not sustainable as it puts themselves in a schizophrenic situation. Every two years it changes its mood because of the constant power struggle in PAS between the progressives and the conservatives.

One of the outside-the-box solution for the current predicament is to invite PasMa members to join DAP so that DAP can fully dissolve its non-Muslim identity.

The result of this might give the opposition the upper hand on the long term in charting a new course for Malaysia's long-running race politics. The opposition is setting its own rules and is walking the talk of Malaysians' Malaysia.

If this is to be realised, DAP needs to give way for the mass migration of PasMa members and let them occupy some executive positions in the party.

This will send a strong message to the electorate that there is a clear choice now if you are to support the opposition, you are taking Malaysia forward towards a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation as proposed by our forebears.

The opposition is playing the Malaysian card as opposed to Umno, who has been dictating the race card for the past five decades in Malaysian politics. The ulama faction of PAS is also playing by the same rules set by Umno, but instead it is concentrating on the religious card. Malay-centric and Islam-centric are the different sides of the same coin in Malaysian politics.

If PasMa is to form a new political party, the opposition is still playing the same race and religious card dictated by Umno. Malaysia is still stuck in this quagmire of race and religion and can't move forward.

One can blame the ulama faction of PAS in tabling the hudud bill unilaterally without consulting the other component parties, or one can blame PAS president Hadi Awang for the deterioration of relations in the Pakatan pact. The reality is that the opposition is still trapped in race and religion politics.

### Charting a new course

Members of PasMa, if they are to join DAP, can be a great inspiration for the Malay-Muslim community in charting a new course for Islamic politics in Malaysia. The message is 'Play it professionally'. In other words, yes, PasMa members are devout Muslims but they do not dictate their Muslim beliefs onto others. They perform their duty professionally according to Islamic principles that they hold dear to but does not use Islam to over-ride everything political.

The ulama faction of PAS, however, wave the religious card far too often that it inhibits their mental awareness of the modern world's developments. It has demonstrated time and time again their inability to perform their political tasks professionally.

The recent poor response to the the January 2015 flood is a good example of the unprofessional ulama in performing their duties as politicians. A statement like, "It is

God's wrath because of Kelantan not implementing the hudud law" is an example of their unprofessional approach to a modern-day reality.

This is an opportune time for DAP to think deep on this change if they desire to. Umno's leadership challenge and the impending economic crisis due to 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and the goods and Services Tax (GST) will attract more fence-sitters to the opposition.

Hanging on to the old Pakatan consensus model with the current PAS ulama at the helm is a dead-end and disastrous for the future of multi-religious and multi-ethnic Malaysia. It will give more power to the ulama of PAS if Pakatan stay intact in its current form.

A split in PAS or a merger of PasMa and DAP is the way forward.

The other positive effect of the hudud debacle is that the East Malaysian political parties might join hands with the opposition in the near future, with the way the race and religion politics is played at the moment.

DAP venturing in the Teluk Intan by-election last year to place a young Malay woman candidate is akin to testing the waters. The unfortunate predicament that Pakatan is in now requires DAP to jump into the water instead of testing it.

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