

**Crisis in PAS worst in more than 40 years, says former secretary-general**  
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The crisis in PAS and the viciousness of its election campaign this year is the worst in the party's recent history, trumping even the time party leaders ousted its president in 1982, said a senior leader.

Former party secretary-general Datuk Kamarudin Jaafar said the political culture in the Islamist party has reached a new low with name-calling and smear campaigns being used by its rival factions ahead of PAS's 61st assembly.

"In my research, the Asri crisis was not as bad as this. This is even worse," said the former Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) lecturer, who is now a central committee member.

Kamarudin was referring to the crisis in 1982, when then president Tan Sri Asri Muda was forced to resign following a putsch by junior leaders who now control the party.

Asri's resignation paved the way for PAS to be taken over and run by ulama or Muslim scholars through the doctrine of leadership by the ulama.

This doctrine has since influenced the party's direction, who can get elected to the top post of president and the composition of the shura council, its highest decision-making body.

Kamarudin said even while Asri was being hounded out of office, the latter had always managed to act professionally and preserved the party's image.

"Asri was very disciplined when conducting the affairs of the party even while he was being attacked," said Kamarudin of Asri, who was blamed for PAS's inability to recapture Kelantan in the 1982 general election.

After constant pressure from young leaders in the party including the late Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, Asri eventually resigned after the party's assembly in 1982.

Similarly, this year's assembly is expected to see a showdown between two factions, one pro-Pakatan Rakyat (PR) and the other who feels that PAS has not benefitted by being in the opposition pact.

One of those factions is being supported by its president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang and there are talks that he will face a stiff challenge to keep his post as party chief.

Campaigning has reached a fever pitch and Kamarudin said he has never seen the type of tactics that was being used now.

The most recent was an audio recording being spread online which is being used to smear PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu. A male voice that sounds like Mohamad's is heard plotting to overthrow Hadi.

Several weeks ago, PAS central committee member and election director Dr Hatta Ramli saw his car torched after it was claimed that he was behind a conspiracy to topple the president.

"Both of these issues are very worrying and we fear that it affects PAS internally," said Kamarudin.

There is also almost no room for differences of opinion among leaders and activists any longer, he said.

The acrimony between the factions, Kamarudin said, had descended to the level of members calling each other names and acting in ways that were unbecoming of members of a faith-based party.

"Some people say professionals should be more polite when criticising ulama and there are those who say the ulama should also do the same when it comes to professionals.

"But sadly the ulama act like they cannot be criticised but they themselves can call others devils, insane or pigs. This is worrying," said Kamarudin.

He also expected the assembly this year to determine whether PAS stays in the PR.

"If PAS leaves, the party could either go it alone or it could join up with others," said Kamarudin, who has been the MP for Tumpat for the past four terms. – March 4, 2015.

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