

PAS Elections: Are There Attempts To Unseat Hadi?

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KUALA LUMPUR, (Bernama) -- PAS' 61st congress or muktamar next week is seen as a crucial one as the party gears up to elect its line-up of leaders for the 2015-2017 term, and chart its future plans and directions.

Political analysts and observers feel that the elections this time around have grabbed the attention of many mainly because the head honcho himself is being challenged, something unseen since 1973.

The polls outcome is also set to determine the fate of Pakatan Rakyat (PR), comprising PAS, DAP and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), and whether or not the three parties will continue to team up as a coalition to face the 14th General Election.

CONGRESS A PLATFORM TO OUST HADI?

The run-up to the elections had initially seen PAS President Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang being a firm favourite of the delegates, more so following his appointment as Vice-President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars on Aug 22 last year by the union Chairman, Dr Yusuf Al-Qaradawi.

Abdul Hadi, however, was not in the good books of the party's allies as DAP and PKR were uncomfortable with his mindset and leadership style. In fact, the leaders of the two parties viewed Abdul Hadi as a liability to the coalition's aspiration to boost voter support.

Not surprisingly, temperatures are now rising just as the candidates and their supporters move into the last lap of campaigning. Will delegates disgruntled with the party's top leadership use the elections as a platform to unseat the Member of Parliament (MP) for Marang, who has helmed PAS for 13 years since 2002?

With another week to go before the elections, voices expressing discontent with Abdul Hadi and even belittling him are clearly audible.

Prof Madya Datuk Dr Samsul Adabi Mamat, who is a senior lecturer at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, said based on his observation and the contest for the No 1 post, attempts were being made to change PAS' administrative regime.

"There are efforts to change the current leadership... if new leaders are elected, they will be able to formulate a new approach for the party.

"Furthermore, (with new leaders in place) those issues which had caused a wedge between Abdul Hadi and PKR and DAP will not arise anymore, and relations among the three allies

in Pakatan Rakyat will improve," he told Bernama.

Samsul Adabi said PAS' PR allies were uncomfortable with Abdul Hadi, who obviously did not see eye to eye with his opposition counterparts.

ELEMENT OF INTERFERENCE

A recent statement issued by a DAP leader seemed to imply that should Abdul Hadi retain his post in the party elections, the PR coalition may cease to exist altogether.

Does it not appear to be a veiled attempt to interfere in the election affairs of PAS?

Samsul Adabi said "outsiders" who were uncomfortable working with Abdul Hadi could be seen trying to meddle in the PAS elections, probably to ensure that only candidates deemed to be "friendly" with them were elected.

"It can't be denied that there's pressure and interference from outside to determine the party's new line-up of leaders. Looking at the list of candidates contesting, it's clear that some of them are there to represent the interests of PAS' allies," he said.

This political analyst was, however, confident that Abdul Hadi would succeed in retaining his post, despite the stiff competition posed by his rival, veteran PAS leader Ahmad Awang.

DAP veteran leader Lim Kit Siang wrote in his blog last Sunday that the PR coalition may only have "two more weeks to live".

He wrote: "... with UMNO and the Barisan Nasional (BN) at its weakest and the conditions for a historic change in place, except that at this moment, Pakatan Rakyat itself on the brink of disintegration."

The MP for Gelang Patah alleged that the idea of PAS forming a unity government with the BN, which Abdul Hadi was said had approved of, was among the reasons for the eventual disintegration of PR.

DISPUTE BETWEEN PAS AND DAP

It is no secret that PAS and DAP have been at loggerheads with each other over several issues.

In fact, PAS' main agenda of implementing the hudud penal code in Kelantan had dealt a blow to the very foundation of the opposition coalition, which was formed after the 12th General Election in 2008.

PKR and DAP became even more critical of Abdul Hadi following his move to introduce a Private Member's Bill to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) 1965 at the Dewan Rakyat, to pave the way for hudud to be implemented in Kelantan.

Samsul Adabi said the rift between PAS and DAP became more obvious during the recent by-elections.

"During the Pengkalan Kubur by-election in Kelantan, DAP didn't come forward to help campaign for PAS. In the Permatang Pauh by-election (in Penang), there were disputes among PAS members themselves over PKR's choice of candidate and Abdul Hadi didn't turn up to campaign. This showed that there was indeed a serious dispute between PAS and DAP," he said.

Nevertheless, he pointed out, one could still expect the impossible to materialise as it would be difficult for PAS to "to cut a relationship that can't be fixed" in the short term.

"PAS still wants to remain in Pakatan Rakyat and its two allies also realise that they need PAS in order to win the next general election," he said.

In fact, on Monday PAS Vice-President Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man urged the DAP to stop its attacks on the party for the sake of safeguarding the interests of the opposition coalition.

The leader was quoted by the media as saying that PAS was "fed up" with the DAP's attitude of criticising the party and Abdul Hadi.

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