

PAS should separate party politics from Islamic struggle, say analysts
The Malaysian Insider
June 3, 2015
By Zulkifli Sulong

PAS delegates, expected to vote in a new crop of leaders at its muktamar (general assembly) which begins tomorrow, should bring about a new approach by separating party politics from its Islamic struggle, say analysts.

This, according to them, is because the party's current model of politics is no longer appropriate in today's global political reality.

The political observers predicted that with the pro-ulama faction growing stronger, the upcoming party polls will see the professionals in the Islamist party soundly defeated.

As such, delegates will have to either vote for the professionals - so that they can fully lead the party - or isolate themselves from the ulama to form a new party before later joining Pakatan Rakyat partners, PKR and DAP, and other civil movements.

This is one of the exit plans that needed to be considered by the professionals in the party after the much anticipated 61st muktamar, said Dr Abdul Latif Ibrahim of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

"PAS's model now is wrong. Previously it was okay, but now, with what we have learned from Turkey, Tunisia and other places, Islamic movements can no longer be political parties.

"The Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt) has also changed. They set up a political party, to allow it to enter the political arena and deal with arising issues," said the former adviser to PAS assistant secretary-general.

Latif said the approach by PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang and the young ulama who supported him was no longer appropriate in today's global political reality.

"They (delegates), together with other Muslim professionals in Abim and Ikram for example, need to be prepared to set up a new political party with PKR and DAP, along with other civil societies with the same objectives, namely to bring about change in the country," he said, referring to two Muslim organisations in the country.

"Some say a splinter party will not last. I say no, because the split in PAS now is coming from bottom to the top. If top leaders join (the new party), their followers will follow in droves.

"This is the big picture now which has to be accepted by PAS members if they want to move forward," Latif told The Malaysian Insider.

Studies by an independent body have shown that professionals in PAS will all lose

their posts in the coming polls due to differences of opinion with their ulama counterparts.

Half of the delegates in the muktamar are expected to be first timers, while only 10% are expected to be free from the influence of the two groups, of which the majority is controlled by the those who are known to be pro-ulama.

Hadi's challenger, former Perak PAS commissioner Ahmad Awang, is expected to get only 25% of the votes, while deputy president Mohamad Sabu who is facing Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man is expected to get only 35% of the votes.

Only Salahudin Ayub, the incumbent vice-president, is expected to retain his post, while both Youth chief Suhaizan Kaiat and Women's wing leader Siti Zailah Yusof are also expected to lose.

Pollster Ibrahim Sufian from the Merdeka Centre also expects the same results.

"I think the ulama will win big," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Latif pointed out that not much can be done if only a small number of leaders with professional backgrounds win the elections.

"If Salahudin wins and add that to some professionals who manage to win seats in the central committee, then how much can they do?" asked the UTM lecturer, adding that currently, majority of the PAS central committee are leaders from the professional group.

"The committee previously had supported Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail to be Selangor MB at the time when it was filled with mostly professional leaders, and yet moves were made behind the scenes to push her aside," he noted.

He felt that both PAS leaders and members need to learn from their foreign counterparts.

"They need to have a new platform, such as setting up a new political party like Turkey's AKP which is not an Islamic movement," he said, referring to the party that has been in power in the country since 2002. – June 3, 2015.

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