

'PAS unlikely to join hands with Umno, but may work together on Malay issues'
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By A Azim Idris

A political analyst says the newly-formed Pakatan Harapan opposition needs PAS' vote bank to wrest Putrajaya but the situation is compounded by PAS' refusal to cooperate with its splinter party, Parti Amanah Negara. — TRP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR, The impending Umno-PAS collaboration will see the strengthening of Malay unity although it is unlikely that the Islamist party would join the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition in the next general election, according to several political analysts.

Associate Professor Dr Azizudin Mohd Sani, of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), said the cooperation would see the nation's two largest Malay-oriented parties tie up in a myriad of issues involving the race and religion.

This was in light of the olive branch extended to PAS by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak during the 2015 Umno General Assembly last week.

"There are some who say that this meant that PAS would join BN and Umno, but that is not the reality as PAS' deputy president and youth chief have said that they would only cooperate on federal issues.

"They (PAS and BN) may have some common agenda, but PAS would still move as an opposition party that competes against Umno," Azizudin said when contacted today.

Azizudin said the newly-formed Pakatan Harapan opposition needed PAS' vote bank to wrest Putrajaya but the situation was compounded by PAS' refusal to cooperate with its splinter party, Parti Amanah Negara.

"Without PAS, Pakatan Harapan would be politically *tempang* (crippled), and this works in Umno's favour in dividing Pakatan Harapan as an opposition group.

"Umno would have its advantages if Pakatan Harapan was divided although we must admit that previously Pakatan Rakyat parties had only worked together to bring down BN although their fundamental struggles were different,

"At the same time, Umno and BN need PAS, which does not need to enter the ruling coalition.

"PAS only needs to sit outside but be BN-friendly.

"It is currently uncertain whether it would cooperate in the next general election where they can field candidates to ensure victory for PAS in some places," he said, adding that there was a possibility that PAS could support BN to form a federal government after the polls.

Associate Professor Datuk Dr Samsu Adabi Mamat, of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, echoed Azizudin's remarks, pointing out that the rationale behind the cooperation would see a balance be struck in the unity problems faced by the Muslim community.

"The friction within Umno was caused by the cracks in Umno itself and the cooperation has long been in the pipeline to remedy the issue.

"The people found it hard to believe that PAS had once cooperated with DAP. But now that PAS is no longer working alongside DAP, any cooperation by PAS could be a catalyst for Umno."

Dr Samsu opined that the cooperation between the two Malay-based parties would not happen until after the election as they would be problems for both parties in dividing contested seats.

"They would both contest as usual in all states but if there were problems forming a federal government, perhaps PAS would provide its '*tahaluf siyasi*' (political cooperation) to help Umno."

He said PAS would have to make sacrifices in opposition-led states if it was to form a government with Umno.

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