

In PAS, PasMa grows stronger despite Shura Council ban
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BY THE MALAYSIAN INSIDER

In a sign of growing disgruntlement against PAS conservatives, support for the pro-Pakatan Rakyat (PR) Persatuan Ummah Sejahtera (PasMa) is rising with branches now being set up in every state, despite the Shura Council's ban on members joining the cell within the Islamist party.

The Malaysian Insider understands that the fast-growing group has already appointed its chiefs for every state, and is now planning to set up a permanent office and hiring fulltime workers to handle its expansion.

In PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang's home state of Terengganu, where the cell faces the biggest opposition, almost all of the eight districts have each appointed a PasMa leader. Kedah, too, has appointed nearly all its PasMa district chiefs.

"We are not ignoring the (ban by the) Shura Council. What's happening now is that there are conflicting statements from the secretary-general and the Shura Council," said PasMa president Datuk Phahrolrazi Zawawi.

"The secretary-general said there is nothing wrong in joining an NGO, while the Shura Council advised us not to," he said, referring to Datuk Mustapha Ali's statement that PasMa was merely a group.

Phahrolrazi said it was up to the PAS leaders to manage the conflict of orders, adding that responsibility of interpreting the party's constitution lay with the PAS legal and human rights bureau.

Meanwhile, PAS central committee member Khalid Samad intends to take part in PasMa's programme in Ipoh on November 8, while PAS Research Centre director Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad will join PasMa's event in Temerloh on November 15 along with Tengku Puji Tengku Abdul Hamid, a former PAS leader who is now the Pahang PasMa chairman.

PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub has also reminded the party that members have a right to join any group and they cannot be banned from joining any of PasMa's programmes.

"However, the Shura Council has issued an order or advice prohibiting its members from joining PasMa. This situation could lead to doubt and anxiety among PAS members.

"Hence, it is better if both parties discuss this issue to come to a solution," Salahuddin

was quoted as saying by Sinar Harian.

On October 12, the Shura Council, considered the party's highest decision-making body, banned members from participating in the group, which is made up of PAS leaders and activists.

According to the Shura Council secretary, Nik Zawawi Salleh, the ban was in line with Hadi's reminder during his speech at the end of the party's general assembly last month in Johor.

In a rare emotional speech, Hadi had issued a stern warning against deepening factionalism in PAS, or what he termed as "a Jemaah (congregation) within a Jemaah, a party within a party".

Hadi later defended the Shura Council's ban on the cell, saying the decision was made after complaints were lodged at the state level over alleged misconduct among PasMa's members.

But PasMa secretary-general Mohd Taib Ahmad has denied allegations that the cell is a parasite to PAS as well as claims that it intends to register itself as a political party.

"That is what the enemies want, so that PAS is torn apart and Barisan Nasional (BN) can remain. It is the strategy that BN is waiting for: for PAS to break up," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Phahrolrazi said PasMa would continue to remain a group that would observe PR and keep the opposition pact in check.

"We will remain as PasMa. If we become a party, then there's no one else to fill our role," he said.

PasMa was set up on Merdeka day at the height of the Selangor menteri besar crisis, with the objective of ensuring PAS remains with PR.

More than 100 PAS members convened in Kota Baru that day to form PasMa, in response to speculation that the Islamist party was mulling joining Umno to resolve the crisis in Selangor.

But critics of PasMa, who are mainly from PAS's cleric faction, have accused the cell of being made up of members frustrated that they had no leading role in the party.

Taib dismissed such criticism, saying: "People who are frustrated would just keep quiet, but fighters will keep on fighting.

"There are efforts by enemies (within PAS) to split the party from PR. PasMa will expose the evil efforts of these enemies. We have solid evidence," he added. – October 30, 2014.

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