

Offer to PAS shows Najib's desperation, says party leader
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By Zulkifli Sulong

Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak's offer to PAS to join the ruling party in "building a perfect Malaysia" is a sign of desperation, a leader with the Islamist opposition said today.

Former PAS information chief Datuk Mahfuz Omar said Najib's offer today smacked of desperation and showed that Umno was no longer concerned about the non-Muslim vote.

"To me, Najib feels Barisan Nasional can no longer take more than 20% of the non-Muslim vote," Mahfuz (pic, right) said.

Instead, he said, Najib and Umno wanted to pursue the Malay-Muslim vote through cooperation with PAS.

Umno is the lead party in Barisan Nasional (BN), the ruling coalition of which Najib, the prime minister, is also chairman.

Mahfuz, the Pokok Sena MP, said Umno would not stand by and allow the Malay vote to be split three ways between itself, Pakatan Harapan and PAS, if the Islamist party continued to remain on its own on the opposition bench.

"Umno's thinking is that it has to have PAS on BN's side in order to get the overflow of Malay votes from PAS, and for PAS to get Malay votes when it is with Umno."

Mahfuz added that in order to achieve this, Umno was now out to demonise PAS's former ally, the largely Chinese-based DAP, which is part of Pakatan Harapan.

"Umno is at the same time building up hatred towards DAP to get maximum support from the Malays," he said.

Najib did just that today when warning delegates at the Umno assembly that DAP was trying to control other opposition parties in Pakatan Harapan and would reject the Islamic and Malay struggle if they came to power.

Najib today also said Umno members were happy that PAS was no longer with the opposition coalition.

Meanwhile, PAS elections director Datuk Mustafa Ali (pic, right) declined to comment on Najib's offer for PAS and Umno to collaborate and said it was for PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang to answer.

"Let the president answer this issue," Mustafa said when contacted by The Malaysian Insider.

Previously, PAS deputy president Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man, responding to a proposition similar to the one made by Najib at the Umno general assembly today, said PAS would never collaborate politically with Umno.

He said it was impossible as Umno had oppressed PAS members and leaders over various matters, citing as example the denial of Kelantan's oil royalties to the state, which is controlled by the Islamist party.

PAS vice-president Datuk Iskandar Abdul Samad had also rejected Najib's offer before.

A leader of PAS splinter party Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah), meanwhile, said the PAS leadership had to make a clear stand on Najib's offer.

Amanah strategic director Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (pic, left) said the clarification was necessary as it would confirm the main reason why Amanah broke away from PAS in the first place.

"This has been an ongoing issue in PAS, to the extent that some groups of PAS leaders have pushed for silently working with Umno.

"This has been a thorn in the flesh for PAS.

"PAS needs to boldly state whether they agree or not because it determines whether the party's cause for Islam encompasses all, or is limited to the interests of Malay Muslims only.

"This will clarify PAS's stand in cooperating with other parties in Pakatan Harapan in the next general election," said Dzulkefly, who is a former PAS central committee member. – December 10, 2015.

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