

## **Umno, PAS Can Work Together Even If They Remain Separate Entities, Say PAS Leaders Bernama**

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**By Norshazlina Nor'azman**

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- PAS' willingness to work with Umno will not only pave the way for unity among the ummah, but can also lead to a multitude of benefits for all the people in the country.

Both the party leaderships, as well as local political analysts, are positive that the recent developments would lead to fruitful collaborative efforts.

Although Umno and PAS pursue different ideologies and political approaches and have been rivals for decades, it is not impossible for both the Malay-based parties to collaborate on matters close to their hearts although they do not "live under the same roof".

PAS has frequently stressed that any tie-up between the party and Umno would be outside the scope of politics and that cooperation would only be limited to matters that serve the interests of Islam and ensure the well-being of the ummah and the people.

### **PAS RESOLUTE IN ITS STAND**

PAS Vice President Idris Ahmad said the party was willing to extend a helping hand to Umno in various fields, including legal, economic and education, as long as their collaboration benefited the people.

"But PAS is resolute in its stand not to cooperate on political matters. However, we're receptive to cooperating in other fields, as long as they come within the confines of our Islamic struggle.

"This includes cooperating on any approach that is deemed beneficial for the Muslim community and also the others in our diverse society... if there's something good (we can do) for all, why not?" he told reporters after a special party briefing at the Zulkifli Muhammad University College at Taman Melewer in Gombak, here, last Saturday.

The briefing, attended by 200 PAS central and state-level leaders, was held to explain the party's Syura Ulama Council's resolution on the PAS-Umno cooperation issue.

The council had decided that the party would not merge with Umno, but would extend its cooperation in the context of Islam.

There has been much debate over the PAS-Umno cooperation issue after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, in his policy address at the 2015 Umno General Assembly last December, extended an olive branch to PAS to join in building and developing the country in accordance with Islamic laws.

Last month, Najib raised the subject again when he and PAS President Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang shared the same stage at the World Association for Al-Azhar Graduates' (WAAG Malaysia) international conference, here.

### **READY TO COOPERATE**

Commenting on last Saturday's briefing, Idris said the PAS leadership was generally receptive towards PAS cooperating with Umno.

PAS Election Director Datuk Mustafa Ali said initially there was confusion and misunderstanding among PAS members as to the relevance of the party cooperating with Umno.

"But now that we've explained the Syura Council's decision, everyone understands that the two parties will not merge and that they will only cooperate on issues pertaining to the rakyat's interests.

"So now we're going down to the state-level to explain (the PAS-Umno cooperation) to those at the lower levels... hopefully, there won't be any problems," he said.

Mustafa said there was nothing wrong in PAS collaborating with Umno in areas such as education and the economy, especially if it involved the social upliftment of the people.

"For example, we can work together to help flood victims and the poor, and also on education matters, or even oppose Israel together... yes, we can work together, no problem.

"We can cooperate with anyone, not just Umno. But PAS will not forge any political collaboration with Umno, hence there will be no consensus between the two parties at the next general election," he said.

### **NO COMPROMISE**

Meanwhile, PAS Secretary-General Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan said any strategy or action plan developed by the party was subject to change if the situation warranted it.

"It can be changed if we feel that our (fundamental) policies are being compromised. PAS' policies are based on Islamic laws, so we will agree to any strategy or tactic only if it is in line with our policies... we won't compromise on this.

"Take Pakatan Rakyat as an example. When we joined, we emphasised our party's stand on our policies but left (the coalition) when we realised that our policies were being compromised," he said.

On efforts being taken to strengthen PAS, Takiyuddin said it was important to streamline the thinking and understanding of its members so that they could all come to a consensus, particularly on issues such as PAS-Umno cooperation.

"During the (recent) briefing, the president and other top leaders explained the various approaches that have been taken, action plan and also touched on PAS' political directions.

"All those present were receptive (to the explanation), so now we will proceed to the state-level. Our main intention is to popularise a mature and peaceful form of political culture," he said.

### **OTHER RACES NOT LEFT OUT**

A lecturer at Universiti Sains Malaysia's School for Social Science Studies Asso Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian, meanwhile, said although PAS and Umno intended to work together to safeguard the interests of Islam, he was sure the two parties would not ignore the interests of the other races.

He said the other communities also stood to gain from any cooperation between the two parties.

"It will benefit all Malaysians if Umno and PAS come together to explain to Muslims the true teachings of Islam to prevent them from misinterpreting the religion and getting involved with militant groups in Syria.

"At the same time, PAS and Umno can also work together with other BN (Barisan Nasional) component parties to tackle issues faced by the people, like the escalating cost of living and poverty and their housing woes," he said, when contacted by Bernama.

PAS' relationship with Umno went back a long way and has seen a series of ups and downs, said the political analyst, adding that the two parties have had successful collaborations in the past.

Citing examples, he said former Umno and PAS presidents Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor had shared the same stage to discuss the Palestine issue, as well as resolved problems caused by the annual floods in PAS-administered Kelantan.

"History has shown that both parties can cooperate if they want to... many people think that in order for them to cooperate, they must merge. But even without them merging, they can still work together.

"All they have to do is find the common factors that bind them and, at the same time, respect their differences. They must have the confidence that they can cooperate successfully, whether at the top or lower levels," said Sivamurugan.

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