

**PAS is laughing stock of the nation, says Zaid**  
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**DAP man warns Pakatan Harapan not to re-engage with PAS and credits East Malaysian politicians for their public stand against Hadi's shariah bill.**

PETALING JAYA: Former law minister Zaid Ibrahim has described PAS as the laughing stock for having trusted Umno to cooperate with it in the attempt to introduce heavier shariah punishments in Malaysia.

"PAS has become the laughing stock of the nation for trusting Umno to help them achieve their misguided mission," he said in the latest posting on his blog called Zaigeist today.

The former Umno minister who joined DAP on Feb 7, however, cautioned Pakatan Harapan not to be drawn to the idea of cooperating with PAS due to its present strained ties with Umno.

"There is no need to add PAS to the equation and risk spoiling everything," he said.

"Let's leave PAS to its own supporters and leaders," he said, stressing it was possible for PAS and Umno to get together again despite the break in relations.

"The current lull in the PAS-Umno honeymoon is the best thing for the Pakatan Harapan opposition right now, but it's not beyond the two parties to cement their working relationship once again.

"I think they are still on their original mission to break up the opposition, despite the Act 355 hiccup."

On March 29, Prime Minister and Umno president Najib Razak announced the government would not take over and table a private member's bill on the amendments, originally tabled by PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang in the Dewan Rakyat in May last year.

Hadi had later amended the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, or Act 355, in November by proposing to have punishments meted out by shariah courts to be increased to 30 years' imprisonment, fines of up to RM100,000 and up to 100 strokes of the cane.

Currently, shariah criminal punishment is capped at a prison term of three years, fines of up RM5,000 and six strokes of the cane.

Zaid expressed concern that elements in PH would work to re-engage with PAS.

“Now that the party has been abandoned (at least for now) by everyone, I am worried that some PAS lovers in Pakatan Harapan (many are in Selangor and Johor) will be tempted to think again of inviting PAS to join the new political opposition.”

He stressed that PAS would certainly break up the newly-minted but fragile coalition.

He said the PH component parties – PKR, DAP, Amanah and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) – should focus on the registration of the coalition’s symbol, manifesto and seat allocations for the upcoming 14th general election.

“Much work needs to be done. Don’t be distracted,” he said. “Learn to appreciate each other’s political vibes and try to be as harmonious as possible. Learn not to antagonise the core supporters of the respective parties.”

He said the effort is a work in progress, with the difficult task of presenting a united and cohesive opposition front still lying ahead.

Zaid also credited politicians in Sabah and Sarawak as being influential in the move to stop the shariah bill.

“If not for East Malaysia, Act 355 would have been a government bill.

“I believe the Barisan Nasional politicians of Sabah and Sarawak are genuinely committed to refusing to have religious laws be the bedrock of our criminal justice system.”

He also expressed delight that Sarawak’s public stand against the bill had prompted “Machiavellis” in Umno to abandon the use of religion to fool unsuspecting Muslims into voting for them in the coming election.

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