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Pas must spell out Islamic polity

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THE rise of Islamic politics and now militancy in countries with Muslim majorities is usually caused by the weakening structures of those states, beginning spectacularly with the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

Iran became an Islamic theocratic state when the people rose against the Anglo-Russian imposed and US-backed corrupt and repressive Pahlavi monarchy.

Of course, Islamic militancy has a longer history. It exists and will strengthen, in the immediate future, for as long as Islam retains the vitality as perceived by its militant followers.

A government that is perceived to be corrupt and inefficient, and an impoverished economy will necessarily fire the passion for Islamic political militancy. In these circumstances the establishment of Islamic governance or State becomes irresistible.

Since 1979, I have felt that something was brewing in Pas. I was not wrong. Since then, we have accumulated, with increasing speed, enough evidence that Pas wants, come what may, to found a scrupulously Islamic theocratic state. It was abetted by DAP until the recent divorce.

The Umno-led Barisan Nasional government has been under constant pressure from Pas and other Islamic fringes to move towards an "Islamic theocratic state" and away from the present gentle strain of Islam which we actually practise.

This is the way Islam should be observed - in wisdom, peace and tolerance. Islam, contrary to popular perception, is a practical religion. Some followers make it cumbersome, difficult and unattractive for potential converts though Islam, unlike Christianity, is not a proselytising faith. Hence the absence of a network of missionary societies and religious activism.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, last week unequivocally stated that "Malaysia is already an Islamic country" based on the fatwa of the ulama who had defined what constituted an Islamic nation.

To extricate itself from a political Catch-22 situation, Pas has instead asked Dr Mahathir to declare Malaysia an Islamic state via legislation.

There are some 56 countries which are recognised by the United Nations and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as Islamic nations. We are a noted member of both organisations.

Dr Mahathir stressed that nearly all the countries were not, and still unable, to implement the hudud (Islamic penal code).

I want to ask Pas why it is so reluctant to spell out its concept of an Islamic theocratic state.

Ayatollah Khomeini and even General Zia-ul-Haq (of Pakistan) stated openly that they wanted to take Islam back to scrupulously strict adherence to the Quran and the Sunnah (sayings of Prophet Muhammad). Khomeini, to his credit, said so long before he came to power.

Dr Mahathir, Umno and people like me are anxious to maintain the status quo (though striving to improve administration of Islamic institutions and meeting the demands of the religion) whilst simultaneously trying to make Malaysian Muslims, the Malays in particular, adapt themselves to the demands of the global village and K-economy. Is that "un-Islamic"?

Let us be fair and transparent. What Islamic order does Pas cherish? I believe it wishes to replace the present Federal Constitution with the

Constitution of an Islamic government with an entrenched manifestation of laws.

These would provide for hudud, punishments like the whipping of wine bibbers, stoning to death of adulterers, amputation and decapitation of thieves and prohibiting women from working, driving, swimming in a public swimming pool, beach and shopping in mixed malls.

Is it the Iranian model, the Taliban school or Wahabbism it desires? All three are, with some variations, partly perhaps because of culture and even geography, synonymous with militant (political) Islam. Militant political Islam is under control in Saudi Arabia.

Militant Islamists advocate a complete return to "Islam of the first generation" and oppose everything that does not belong to that genre.

As I perceive it, Pas wants to return to the "original Islamic state" under the Prophet. I stand corrected if this is not so.

It is rather ironic that puritanical Wahabbism is associated with the present Saudi Arabia which, I am quite sure, if Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab (the founder of the Wahabi movement) were alive, he would have regarded with profligate loathing.

Pas is not synonymous with Islam. But through crafty spinning it is perceived as such, whether one likes it or not, by many Malays. Perhaps this is their reaction to what they disapprove of and which they can do little to change.

Pas is merely a religio-political group. The Islamic spiritual aspect is secondary, it has become more noted and adept at its political machinations to achieve power, whatever the cost to Malay unity.

Despite controlling two state governments and the efficiency of its political organisation, including a network of kindergartens, madrasah, surau and mosques, its orthodox ideas on governance have somewhat gradually lessened its impact on the majority and predictably frightened the 40 per cent non-Muslim population.

Still, Pas activists are a dedicated lot, speechifying and talking, exhorting, plotting, cajoling and threatening prospective voters to return Pas in the next general election.

This is done almost on a daily basis throughout the nation. They are maniacally confident they are going to win because they are overwhelmed by a hatred of BN and brainwashed into a fervour.

Can Pas vouch that it will not, if it ever comes to power, strip and whip the backs of malefactors, kill adulterous couples and amputate the hands of thieves?

Is it this inability to state categorically its aims the reason why Pas cannot spell out its concept of an Islamic theocratic state before assuming power?

I disagree with President Bush when he called the kamikaze hijackers cowards. They are, if anything, maniacally brave even if what they did was barbaric.

I suppose Pas' leadership is fearless. It will not want to shock and horrify Malaysians. So, come out and state in precise words to describe the party's version and vision of an allegedly blessed and divinely-sanctioned state.

Pas does owe the Malayians, non-Muslims in particular, an explanation of its longing for a truly Islamic polity in a tolerant multi-racial, multi-religious and cultural nation.

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